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CAMBRIDGE STUDIES  
IN  
MEDIEVAL LIFE AND THOUGHT  
Edited by G. G. COULTON

FIVE CENTURIES  
OF RELIGION

IN FOUR VOLUMES  
VOLUME I

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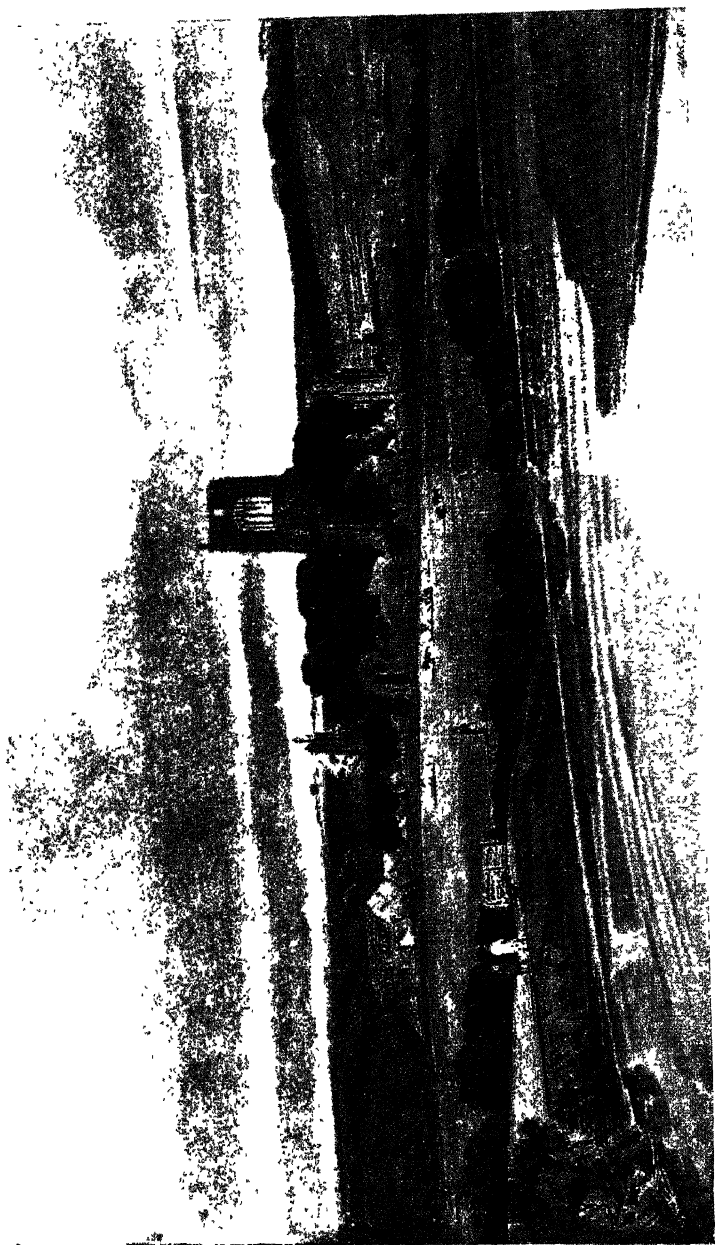
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KIRKSTALL ABBEY, YORKSHIRE. BY THOMAS GIRTIN

# FIVE CENTURIES OF RELIGION

BY

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ENGLISH

VOLUME I

ST BERNARD, HIS PREDECESSORS  
AND SUCCESSORS, 1000-1200 A.D.

CAMBRIDGE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

1929



■

"From the study of history the Church has everything to gain; from the critical examination of every existing movement, from the cultivation of a critical habit in every thinking being, the ministers of religion have nothing to fear, everything to hope."

*Letters of Bishop Stubbs,*  
ed. W. H. HUTTON, 1906, p. 72

"The cause of truth, never dominant in this world, has its ebbs and flows. It is pleasant to live in a day when the tide is coming in. Such is our own day."

CARDINAL NEWMAN,  
*University Sketches*, Lecture xx

*First Edition* 1923

*Second Edition* 1929

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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TO  
THE MASTERS AND FELLOWS  
OF TWO CAMBRIDGE COLLEGES  
TRINITY  
TO WHOM THIS BOOK OWES ITS BEGINNINGS  
ST JOHN'S  
WHOSE SINGULAR GENEROSITY HAS SPEEDED  
ITS COMPLETION

■



## GENERAL PREFACE

THERE is only too much truth in the frequent complaint that history, as compared with the physical sciences, is neglected by the modern public. But historians have the remedy in their own hands; choosing problems of equal importance to those of the scientist, and treating them with equal accuracy, they will command equal attention. Those who insist that the proportion of accurately ascertainable facts is smaller in history, and therefore the room for speculation wider, do not thereby establish any essential distinction between truth-seeking in history and truth-seeking in chemistry. The historian, whatever be his subject, is as definitely bound as the chemist "to proclaim certainties as certain, falsehoods as false, and uncertainties as dubious." Those are the words, not of a modern scientist, but of the seventeenth-century monk, Jean Mabillon; they sum up his literary profession of faith. Men will follow us in history as implicitly as they follow the chemist, if only we will form the chemist's habit of marking clearly where our facts end and our inferences begin. Then the public, so far from discouraging our speculations, will most heartily encourage them; for the most positive man of science is always grateful to anyone who, by putting forward a working theory, stimulates farther discussion.

The present series, therefore, appeals directly to that craving for clearer facts which has been bred in these times of storm and stress. No care can save us altogether from error; but, for our own sake and the public's, we have elected to adopt a safeguard dictated by ordinary business common-sense. Whatever errors of fact are pointed out by reviewers or correspondents shall be publicly corrected with the least possible delay. After a year of publication, all copies shall be provided with such an erratum-slip without waiting for the chance of a second edition; and each fresh volume in this series shall contain a full list of the errata noted in its immediate predecessor. After the lapse of a year from the first publication of any volume, and at any time during the ensuing twelve months, any possessor of that

volume who will send a stamped and addressed envelope to the Cambridge University Press, Fetter Lane, Fleet Street, London, E.C. 4, shall receive, in due course, a free copy of the *errata* in that volume. Thus, with the help of our critics, we may reasonably hope to put forward these monographs as roughly representing the most accurate information obtainable under present conditions. Our facts being thus secured, the reader will judge our inferences on their own merits; and something will have been done to dissipate that cloud of suspicion which hangs over too many important chapters in the social and religious history of the Middle Ages.

G. G. C.

*February, 1920*

## PREFACE

■

ALTHOUGH my other two volumes are almost ready for the press, and could, if necessary, be printed as they stand, yet it seemed better not to let the first wait upon those finishing touches which are still required for the second and third. It is hoped that each volume will be found to have a certain completeness of its own. The second, dealing mainly with the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, will describe in detail the monks' finance, economy, discipline, daily business and exterior relations during the generations in which the institution was possibly strongest in itself, and certainly most conspicuous in the western world; it will be entitled "The Friars and the Dead Weight of Tradition." The third will deal with the reforming efforts of the fifteenth century, their failure to arrest the general decay, and the ensuing catastrophe of the sixteenth century.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Syndics and officers of the University Library and Press for unvarying kindness and help; to my wife for the Index; to Messrs A. Hamilton Thompson and H. E. Salter for their generous communication in advance of many important documents; to Messrs H. S. Bennett and G. R. Potter for valuable assistance in proof-correction, and to the following for kind assistance in illustrating these three volumes: Dr F. J. Allen, M. Lucien Bégule, Messrs C. H. Bothamley and E. M. Beloe, Dr M. R. James, Prof. A. G. Little, Mr H. Olley, the Prior of St Hugh's Charterhouse, MM. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, the Editor of *The Studio*, Messrs Spottiswoode and Co., and the Council of Trinity College, Cambridge.

G. G. C.

January, 1923

■

## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

■

THIS edition incorporates the corrections of detail indicated at different times by reviewers and correspondents. Other more far-reaching criticisms, reposing on differences of outlook rather than upon questions of fact, have already been discussed in the Preface and first Appendix to my second volume. One point, however, needs repetition here; because, although I have emphasized it in the Preface and in two other places of my second volume, yet it has been ignored by at least one prominent reviewer, and may therefore have escaped the notice of other readers.

I claim to have collected my quotations with a real attempt at impartiality; and, to any critic who implies that I have neglected favourable witnesses, I must again answer by asking him to supply some definite reference for this material which he accuses me of omitting. So long as no such reference is given, may I not reasonably suspect that the criticism reposes upon mere surmises, and that this dissatisfaction with my evidence arises from a very natural unfamiliarity with the original documents in what is, after all, something of a bypath in medieval history? To any critic who may know (as apart from imagining) important rebutting evidence, I will gladly reply by printing it for the information of my readers.

G. G. C.

Oct. 15, 1928

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## ERRATA

All references to the Introduction (pp. xxxiii–xlv) are wrongly numbered in the Index. To correct the error the reader should add two to the page number given, e.g., for *Acton*, *Lord*, *xli* read *xlili*, etc.



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## PLATES

NO.

1. KIRKSTALL ABBEY . . . . . FRONTISPIECE  
By Thomas Girtin, from the water-colour in the S. Kensington Museum.

TO FACE

2. A CARTHUSIAN MONK'S CELL . . . . . 16  
From p. 138 of *The Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse* (Burns and Oates, 1893), by kind permission of the Prior of St Hugh's Charterhouse, Partridge Green.

Shows clearly the arrangement by which each monk leads a solitary life within the great monastery. A number of such cells are grouped round the great court, the inmates meeting only thrice in the 24 hours for Divine Service in their church, on Sundays for meals in the common refectory, and on a few other occasions (*i.e.* chapters xiv and xv). This combination of anachoretic and monastic life, possible only to a select few, goes far to explain the Carthusian boast: "Nunquam reformati, quia nunquam deformati."

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NO.		TO FACE
	from heaven; he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever." The four lowest compartments are filled with folk gazing upwards in adoration. The window was probably given by Sir Caspar v. Mülinen and his wife in 1517; a knight and his lady, answering to what we know of these, are represented kneeling and receiving the Host straight from the Pope. The whole idea of the Hostienmühle may be suggested by a play upon the name Mülinen.	
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	See <i>L'Abbaye de Fontenay</i> (Paris, Laurens), by M. Lucien Bégule, who has generously permitted me to reproduce this and other plates from his earlier edition, far more bulky and expensive, which is now out of print. Fontenay can be reached by four miles of pleasant walk from the station of Montbard, on the way to Dijon. The abbey was bought at the Revolution by a brother of Montgolfier, the pioneer of ballooning. His descendants have spent nearly a million francs in restoring it, and are very liberal in allowing their <i>conciergerie</i> to show visitors round. The church, cloisters, lay brethren's workshop, and other parts of the domestic buildings are practically as they were in St Bernard's time; it is even more instructive than Fontaines.	
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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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The dormitory has lost its roof and the upper part of its walls; for a completer specimen of a dormitory see plate 14. Here at Fountains the dormitory forms an upper storey to the undercroft shown in plate 12. To the left we see the rere-dorter, and above, in the background, the three gable windows of the lay brethren's infirmary. Behind, on the right, is the south wall of the church nave, in which the lay brethren worshipped. (See plan, p. 558.)	
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## TEXT-FIGURES

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From the author's <i>Medieval Studies</i> , No. 12, by kind permission of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society. Medieval churches, when the stone is soft enough, often contain many rough sketches of this kind on pillar or wall: there are some of great interest in the west doorways at St Albans Cathedral . . . . .	30
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There is a good translation and continuation of this book by E. J. Millington and Margaret Stokes (Bohn, 1851, 2 vols.).	
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# ABBREVIATIONS AND AUTHORITIES

## ABBREVIATIONS

AA.SS. or AA.SS.Boll.	<i>Acta Sanctorum Bollandiana.</i>
AA.SS.O.S.B.	<i>Acta Sanctorum Ordinis Sancti Benedicti</i> , ed. Mabillon, J.
A.F.H.	<i>Archivum Franciscanum Historicum.</i>
A.L.K.G.	<i>Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte</i> , ed. Denifle and Ehrle.
C.H.E.L.	<i>Cambridge History of English Literature.</i>
<i>Camb. Med. Hist.</i>	<i>Cambridge Medieval History.</i>
C.S.	Camden Society.
D.N.B.	<i>Dictionary of National Biography.</i>
E.E.T.S.	Early English Text Society.
E.H.R.	<i>English Historical Review.</i>
<i>M.G.H. Poetae.</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Poetae Latini aevi Carolini.</i>
<i>M.G.H. Scriptt.</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Scriptores.</i>
P.L.	<i>Patrologia Latina.</i> Migne.
R.S.	Rolls Series, Chronicles and Memorials.

## AUTHORITIES

THIS list is not in any sense exhaustive; it only aims at facilitating reference in cases where the full title of the book is not evident from my text or notes, and at giving the reader a rough idea of the value of different sources.

*Acad. Oise. Mémoires de l'académie d'archéologie du département de l'Oise.*  
(Beauvais, various years.)

Acton, Lord. *Correspondence*, ed. Figgis and Laurence, 1917.

Adams. Henry Adams. *Mont St-Michel and Chartres*, 1913.

A stimulating, but not always accurate book.

Ailred. *Aelredi abbatis opera.* Migne, P.L. vol. 195.

Albers, B. *Consuetudines Monasticae.* Stuttgart, 1907.

*Alphabet of Tales.* E.E.T.S. 1904.

A collection of tales for preachers, mainly from thirteenth century sources.

Alvarus Pelagius (Alvarez Pelayo). *De Planctu Ecclesiae.* 1517.

A Franciscan bishop and papal penitentiary in the early fourteenth century; his book is of extreme value for its frank verdicts on contemporary ecclesiastical and monastic conditions.

## xxii ABBREVIATIONS AND AUTHORITIES

- Ana. Fra. Analecta Franciscana.* (Quaracchi.) Various years.  
*Ancren Riwele*, ed. Morton. C.S. 1853.  
 Antonino, *Summa. Antonini Archiepiscopi Florentini Summa Confessionalis.* Lyons, 1564.

Arx, Ildefons v. *Geschichte d. Kantons St. Gallen.* 1810-3.

A laborious and very valuable piece of local history.

- Ashley, W. J. *Introduction to English Economic History*, 3rd edn. 1911.  
 Ayton, Joh. de Athona, in appendix to Lyndwood's *Provinciale.* 1679.

John of Ayton was, like Lyndwood, a Cambridge doctor in Canon Law; both writers pass, incidentally, very illuminating judgements upon the Church of their day.

- Baissac, J. *Hist. de la diablerie chrétienne*, vol. 1. *Le diable.* Paris, 1882.  
 Bartolus. *Bartholi Tractatus Judiciorum et Processus Sathane contra Genus Humanum.* (Jean Petit.) Paris, c. 1508.

Beissel, S. *Geschichte der Verehrung Marias in Deutschland während des Mittelalters.* Freiburg i/B. 1909.

- Benoît, D. P. *Histoire de l'Abbaye et de la terre de Saint-Claude.* Montreuil, 1891-2.

The author's diligence is beyond all praise; his judgements will not always commend themselves to those who follow his documents.

- Berchorius. *Petri Berchorii opera omnia.* Cologne, 1730-1.

The *Repertorium Morale*, filling the last two volumes of this edition, is full of valuable evidence. Pierre Berchoire or Bersuire was Prior of St-Éloi at Paris, and died in 1362.

- Berthold of Regensburg. *Predigten*, ed. Pfeiffer, F. 1862.

A Franciscan of the second generation, and one of the greatest mission-preachers of the Middle Ages; a mine of information for the social history of the mid-thirteenth century.

- Biagi, G. *Men and Manners of Old Florence.* 1899.

- Bourbon. Étienne de Bourbon. *Anecdotes historiques*, ed. Lecoy de la Marche, A. 1877.

Almost as valuable for the social history of the thirteenth century as Jacques de Vitry and Thomas Cantimpratanus.

- Bromyard, J. *Summa Praedicatorum.* 1518.

The author was a Dominican of Chaucer's day; his books are full of social and ecclesiastical information which has never been properly exploited.

- Burck, G. *Stand und Herkommen der Insassen einiger Klöster der mittelalterlichen Mark Meissen.* Meissen, 1913.

A careful piece of statistical work by a Protestant writer.

- Busch. *De Ref. Johann Busch. Liber de Reformatione Monasteriorum*, ed. K. Grube. Halle, 1887.

A source of extreme value. But Dr K. Grube's monograph, *Johannes Busch* (Freiburg i/B. n.d.) must be used with great caution; it is responsible for some of the gravest inaccuracies in L. Eckenstein's *Woman under Monasticism*.

Butler, E. C. *Benedictine Monachism*. 1919.

Valuable in many ways, but entirely dependent on secondary sources for the latter half of the Middle Ages.

Caes. Heist. Caesarius of Heisterbach. *Dialogus Miraculorum*, ed. Strange, J. Cologne, 1851.

Unsurpassed in value for the social history of the thirteenth century. An English translation by H. v. E. Scott is in preparation.

*Cartulaire de Molesme*. *Cartulaire de l'Abbaye de Molesme*, ed. Laurent. 1907.

Champion, E. *La France d'après les cahiers de 1789*. 1897.

Throws valuable side-lights on many medieval conditions which still survived under the *Ancien Régime*.

*Cistercian Fathers, or lives and legends of certain saints . . . of the Order of Cîteaux*. Translated by Collins, H. First series. 1872.

The only book in English which contains a good many first-hand touches from the early Cistercian records.

*Cons. Sublac. Consuetudines Sublacensis Monasterii*, ed. Allodi, L. Subiaco, 1902.

These customs are at least as old as 1089: see Allodi's Introd. p. x.

Dacheux, L. *Jean Geiler de Kaysersberg*. Paris, 1876.

A very valuable study of Church life at Strassburg in the early sixteenth century, by a scholarly Roman Catholic priest.

D'Arbois. *Études sur l'état intérieur des abbayes Cisterciennes*, by D'Arbois de Jubainville, H. 1858.

A fully-documented monograph based entirely upon original documents; it is unfortunately out of print and almost unobtainable.

David of Augsburg. *De exterioris et interioris hominis compositione*. Quaracchi, 1899.

David was pupil (not master, as was once thought) to Berthold of Regensburg; he is one of our most illuminating sources for monastic discipline in the thirteenth century.

Denifle, H. *Die Universitäten d. Mittelalters*. 1885. (Vol. 1 all published.)

Duchesne, L. *Histoire ancienne de l'église*. (English translation, 1910.)  
Dugdale-Caley. *Monasticon Anglicanum*, by W. Dugdale, ed. Caley, J., etc. 1817-30.

The most voluminous collection of monastic documents, with the exception of Mabillon's, in any language.

Durand, Guillaume. *Tractatus de modo generalis concilii celebrandi*. 1671.

The author was Bishop of Mende, and nephew to the celebrated writer on Church Symbolism. This treatise, written at the Pope's bidding for the Ecumenical Council of Vienne in 1311, deals very fully with the matters which most needed reform at that date.

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This Ekkehard, fourth of the five writers of that name who flourished at St-Gall, died in 1071. His chronicle, the most valuable of all that century for monastic life, has been freely utilized by S. R. Maitland in his *Dark Ages*.

*Exord. Mag. Cist. Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*. P.L. vol. 185.

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The monk, really of Eynsham, was misnamed after Evesham by the first printer of this most interesting story, W. de Machlinia, about 1482 A.D.

*Eynsham Cartulary*, ed. Salter, H. E. (Oxford Hist. Soc.) 1907-8.

Contains, among other valuable documents and disquisitions, the text of the Revelation wrongly ascribed to Evesham.

Félibien, M. *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Denis*. 1706.

Fowler, J. T. Cistercian Statutes. *Yorks. Archaeol. Assocn. Journal*, vols. ix, x, xi. 1886-90.

*Franc. Opusc. Opuscula S. Francisci*. Quaracchi, 1904.

A very cheap and useful edition.

Gautier de Coincy. *Miracles de Notre Dame*, ed. Poquet. 1857.

Printed in a limited edition, it is now almost unprocurable. But see Lommatzsch.

Gerson. *Joannis Gersonii opera*. Paris, 1606.

Gerson was perhaps the greatest churchman of the fifteenth century; his voluminous works are full of valuable evidence which has never been fully exploited.

Gladbach. Stratner, J. *Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungsgeschichte der Abtei München Gladbach im Mittelalter*. Gladbach, 1911.

A valuable monograph by a Roman Catholic student.

*Glories of Mary*, by St Alfonso Liguori, transl. by M. T. Weld. London, 1852.

Godfrey of Viterbo. *Pantheon*, ed. Struve. 1726.

*Golden Legend, or Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*. (Temple Classics.)

Guibert. *Guiberti abbatis de Novigento opera*. P.L. vol. 156.

Guignard, P. *Les monuments primitifs de la règle cistercienne*. Dijon, 1878.

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Harnack, A. *Das Mönchthum*. English transl. by Kellet and Marseille. 1901.

Heimbucher, M. *Die Orden u. Kongregationen der katholischen Kirche*. 2nd edn. 1907-8.

Herolt. *Ex. Johannes Herolt. Promptuarium Exemplorum*.

Herolt. *Mirac. Johannes Herolt. Miracula B. Virginis*.

Herolt. *Serm.* Johannes Herolt. *Sermones Discipuli*, in two parts, *De Tempore* and *De Sanctis*.

These three were often printed and bound together in a single volume. That which I have mostly used was printed at Rouen about 1510.

Humbert de Romans. *De Eruditione Praedicatorum* in M. de la Bigne, *Maxima Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum*, vol. xxv. Lyons, 1677.

Humbert (d. 1277) was fifth General of the Dominican Order, and his testimony is of special value.

Ildefons, see Arx.

Imbart de la Tour, P. *Les origines de la Réforme*. 1905-14.

A very valuable book by a learned and fair-minded Roman Catholic professor.

Janssen, J. *Geschichte d. deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang d. Mittelalters*. 17th edn. Freiburg i/B. 1897.

Full of valuable material, but must be used with great caution; see appendix 1.

Jebb, R. C. *Has art thriven best in an age of faith?* Glasgow, 1889.

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Jocelin of Brakelond, ed. Clarke. Transl. by Clarke, Sir E. London (Murray), 1903.

The first translation of this book in *The King's Classics* was also by Sir E. Clarke; the translation at present current in that series is less accurate, and the preface is particularly untrustworthy.

*Jub. Faux Miracle*. Article by Dom Liber [C. Potvin] in the *Revue de Belgique* for 1870. Reprinted twice in pamphlet form, i.e. (1) *Le Jubilé d'un Faux Miracle*. Brussels, 1870; (2) *Le Faux Miracle du Saint Sacrement à Bruxelles*. 2nd edn. Brussels, 1874.

Kalischer, E. *Beiträge zur Handelgeschichte der Klöster zur Zeit der Grossgrundherrschaften*. Berlin, 1911.

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Kempis, Thomas à. *Opera*, ed. Sommaliius, H. 1759.

Kirkstall Coucher. *The Coucher Book of Kirkstall Abbey*. (Thoresby Soc. vol. viii.) 1904.

Lamprecht. *Beiträge*. K. Lamprecht, *Beiträge zur Geschichte d. franz. Wirtschaftslebens im 11ten Jahrdt.* 1878.

Lamprecht. *Wirth.* K. Lamprecht, *Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter*. 1885-6.

Masterly studies by one of the greatest social historians of our day.

Lancre, P. de. *Tableau de l'inconstance des mauvais anges et démons*. Paris, 1612.

A book of extraordinary interest, by a magistrate who was sent officially to deal with witchcraft in the Basque provinces.

L.A. Wilson. *The Worcester Liber Albus*. Wilson, Canon J. M. 1920.

A very valuable analysis, for the general reader, of the documents printed in the next item.



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- L. A. Worcs. *The Liber Albus of the Priory of Worcester*, parts I and II. Worcs. Hist. Soc. 1919.

Contains a calendar of the first 1219 documents in this great monastic register, summarized, annotated and indexed by Canon J. M. Wilson.

- Lea, H. C. *History of Auricular Confession and Indulgences in the Latin Church*. 1896.

- Lea, H. C. *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*. 3rd ed. 1907.

- Lea, H. C. *History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*. 1888.

Contain the completest and most scientific discussions of these subjects, from the historical point of view, that have yet been published.

- Leach, A. F. *The Schools of Medieval England*. 1915.

- Lechler, G. V. *John Wiclif and his English precursors*, transl. Lorimer, P. 1878.

- Lecoy de la Marche, A. *L'esprit de nos aïeux*. Paris [1888].

A small jest-book, mainly collected from medieval preachers' manuals; it is now, unfortunately, out of print.

- Little, A. G. *Studies in English Franciscan history*. 1917.

The Ford Lectures delivered at Oxford in 1916; indispensable to the student of Franciscan history.

- Lives of the Brethren*. A translation of the Dominican *Vitae Fratrum*, by J. P. Conway. Newcastle, 1896.

- Lommatzsch, E. *Gautier de Coincy als Satiriker*. 1913.

A valuable monograph, exploiting the social and ecclesiastical information yielded by a book which is beyond the reach of most students.

- Lucius, E. *Die Anfänge des Heiligenkults in der christlichen Kirche*. Tübingen, 1904.

- Lupton, J. H. *Life of John Colet*. 1887.

- Lyndwood, W. *Provinciale*. 1679.

The standard medieval book for English students of Canon Law. Lyndwood studied at Cambridge and then at Oxford; he died in 1446 as Bishop of St Davids. The book is full of valuable sidelights on history.

- Mabillon, *Ann. Annales Ordinis S. Benedicti*. Mabillon, J. 1703-39.

This, with the companion AA.SS.O.S.B., forms the most valuable contribution, beyond all comparison, ever made to monastic history.

- Mabillon, J. *Traité des études monastiques*. 1691.

- Maitland, S. R. *The Dark Ages*. 1890.

A book first published in the early days of the Tractarian movement, by the grandfather of Prof. F. W. Maitland, who characterized it admirably (H. A. L. Fisher, *Life of F. W. M.* 1910, pp. 2-3): "It seems to me that he did what was wanted just at the moment when it was wanted." He pricked many ultra-Protestant bubbles; and it is rather his followers than he who have swung the pendulum too far in the other direction.

- Mâle, E. *L'Art religieux du XIII<sup>e</sup> en France*. 1898.

- Mâle, E. *L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge*. 1908.

Very valuable for the study of iconography and symbolism, though rather too indulgent to exaggerated theories which have little documentary support. An excellent translation of the earlier volume by Dora Nussey, *Religious Art*, etc. (Dent, 1913.)

Manrique, A. *Annales Cistercienses*. 1642-59

An uncritical, but laborious and valuable collection of early sources.

Mapes (or Map), Walter. *Latin poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. Wright, T. C.S. 16.

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Martène, E. *De antiquis Monachorum Ritibus*. 1764.

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Martène, E. *Voyage littéraire de deux religieux Bénédictins*. 1724.

Martène, E. and Durand, U. *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*. 1717.

Meffret, Fest. and Temp. *Hortulus Reginae*. (a) *Sermones de Praecipuis Sanctorum Festivitatibus*. Munich, 1611; (b) *Sermones de Tempore Pars aestivalis*. Munich, 1612.

Though these sermons enjoyed great popularity, little is known of the author but that he was a priest of the diocese of Meissen, who flourished between 1443 and 1476.

*Mélanges Mabillon*. 1908.

A memorial volume of addresses and essays composed for the bicentenary of the great scholar's death.

Méon, D. M. and Barbazon, E. *Fabliaux et Contes*. Paris, 1808.

*Miracles*. *Miracles de St-Benoît*, ed. Certain, E. de. (Société de l'histoire de France.)

Mirk, see Myrc.

More, Sir Thomas. *English Works*, ed. Rastell. London, 1557.

More, Sir Thomas. *Utopia*, ed. Lumby. 1879.

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Myrc (Mirk), John. *Festial: a collection of Homilies*. E.E.T.S. 1905.

One of the earliest of English printed books; this, and the author's *Instructions for Parish Priests* (E.E.T.S. 1868) are of great value for the history of religious education. The author was roughly contemporary with Chaucer, and governed the priory of Lilleshall in Shropshire.

Nider, J. *De Reformatione Religiosorum*. Antwerp, 1611.

Nider, J. *Formicarium* (alias *Formicarius*). Douai, 1602.

Nider, J. *Preceptorium*. Douai, 1611.

Nider was prior of the great Dominican friary at Bâle, papal inquisitor and finally rector of the University of Vienna: he died in 1438. He is one of our earliest and fullest authorities on witchcraft; his utterances on church reform deserve more attention than they have received.

*Nomasticon Cisterciense*, by Dom Julien Paris, ed. Séjalon, H. Solesmes. 1892.

The fullest existing collection of Cistercian Statutes, from the beginning to the Reformation. Even this modern edition is already out of print and almost unprocurable.

*Northumberland Assize Rolls*, ed. Page, W. (Surtees Soc. 88.) Durham, 1891.

# xxviii ABBREVIATIONS AND AUTHORITIES

Pelbart, O. *Pomerium Sermonum de Sanctis. Pars Estivalis*. Hagenau, 1515.

Pelbart, O. *Pomerium Sermonum de Beata Virgine*. Hagenau, 1515.

The author was a Hungarian Franciscan; his first volume was printed in 1475 and he died early in the sixteenth century. Like many Franciscan preachers, he supplies much valuable historical evidence.

Pez, Blannbekin. *Agnetis Blannbekin...vita*, ed. Pez, B. Vienna, 1731.

Valuable chiefly for the "Botho" miracles printed in the same volume. See appendixes 19 and 20.

Pez, B. *Thesaurus anecdotorum novissimus*. 1721-.

Pfeiffer, F. *Marienlegenden*. 1846.

Pirenne, H. *Histoire de Belgique*. Brussels, 1902.

Very valuable for social history.

Poole, R. L. *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought*. 1884. 2nd edn. 1920.

Potter, L. J. A. de. *Vie de Scipion de Ricci*. 1825.

de Ricci, Bishop of Pistoia, supported the religious reforms of Leopold in Tuscany and Joseph II in Austria; he was deposed by the pope and died in 1810. The documents printed in this book show how many medieval conditions had survived almost unchanged in eighteenth century Italy.

Powicke, F. M. *Ailred of Rievaulx and his biographer Walter Daniel*. Manchester, 1922.

A valuable monograph on one of the greatest of our medieval abbots, with important extracts from unprinted sources.

*Pupilla Oculi*, by Burgo, J. de, Chancellor of Cambridge University.

The book, written in 1385 as a guide for parish priests, passed through many early editions; that which I have used was printed at Paris in 1518.

Pusey, E. B. *Eirenicon*. 1865.

Rashdall, H. *Doctrine and development*. 1898.

Rashdall, H. *The idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*. (Bampton Lectures, 1915.) 1919.

Rashdall, H. *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*. 1895.

Razzi. S. Razzi, *Miracoli della Gloriosa Vergine Maria*. Florence, 1618.

Razzi was Abbot of Camaldoli, and a writer well-known in his own day. He died towards the end of the sixteenth century. This volume contains a characteristic selection of medieval Mary-legends.

*Reliquiae Antiquae*, ed. Wright, T. and Halliwell, J. O. H. 1841-3.

*Revue Bénédictine*. Published by the Benedictines of Maredsous.

A learned periodical of great value for monastic history; far superior to anything of the kind which is published in English. See *Studien*, etc.

Richard, C. L. *Analysis Conciliorum*. 1778.

A very useful summary of conciliar decrees from the earliest date down to 1607.

Riegger, J. A. S. von. *Amoenitates Literariae Friburgenses*. 1775-6.

A valuable collection of extracts from the writings of enlightened German churchmen on the verge, and during the early years, of the Reformation.

Rocher, Abbé J. N. M. *Histoire de l'abbaye royale de St-Benoît-sur-Loire*. Orléans, 1865.

A valuable, though somewhat uncritical, monograph.

Rosignoli, C. G. *Maraviglie di Dio nel Divinissimo Sacramento*. Venice, 1717.

Though published by a Jesuit "with the licence of his superiors," this book is now extremely rare; there is no copy in the British Museum Library. It contains 120 histories of Mass-miracles, principally medieval.

Roskoff, G. *Geschichte des Teufels*. 1869.

Royce, D. *Landboe of Winchcombe*. 1892-3.

Sackur, E. *Die Chuniacenser in ihrer kirchlichen und allgemeingeschichtlichen Wirksamkeit bis zur Mitte des 11<sup>ten</sup> Jahrds.* 1892-4.

A scholarly work, but far more valuable for political than for social history.

St-Cher. *Hugonis de S. Caro opera omnia in universum Vetus et Novum Testamentum*. Venice, 1600; and Cologne, 1621 (an edition which follows that of Venice page for page).

One of the most distinguished among the early Dominicans; these eight folios contain a wealth of hitherto neglected evidence.

Savine, A. *English Monasteries on the eve of the Dissolution*. Oxford, 1909.

A scientific and exhaustive study by a Russian Professor of the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, indispensable to the serious student of monastic history. If the author is misled here and there by his comparative unfamiliarity with English geography and social conditions, we owe him all the more gratitude for undertaking, in Moscow, a task which our own countrymen had neglected for nearly a century.

Schönbach, A. E. *Studien zur Geschichte d. altdeutschen Predigt*. Vienna, 1900-7. [The different essays are quoted by their dates.]

Studies of extraordinary learning and historical value.

Seeböhm, F. *Oxford Reformers*. (Everyman's Library.)

Seidl, N. *De Pueris Oblatis*. Munich, 1872.

A most scholarly monograph: see chapter xiv.

Sharpe, E. *Architecture of the Cistercians*. 1874.

Smyth, J. *Lives of the Berkeleys*. (Bristol and Gloucester Arch. Soc. 1883-5.)

Full of documentary information from records which have since disappeared.

*Spec. Doct.*

*Spec. Hist.*

*Spec. Morale*

*Spec. Nat.*

} See Vincent of Beauvais.

*Speculum Spiritualium*. Printed at Paris at the expense of W. Bretton of London in 1510.

One of the many books by anonymous or little-known authors which testify to religious unrest and aspirations on the verge of the Reformation. I quote from the British Museum copy.

Sprenger, J. *Malleus Maleficarum*. Frankfurt, 1600.

Gives almost as early and valuable evidence for witchcraft as Nider. Sprenger also was a Dominican and papal inquisitor; he wrote about 1495. *Stud. u. Mit. Studien und Mittheilungen a. d. Benedictiner- und Cistercienserorden*. Würzburg. Various years.

A scientific periodical as scholarly and valuable as the *Revue Bénédictine*.

*Summa Angelica*, by Angelus de Clavasio. 1521.

The author (d. 1495) took his name from Chivasso near Genoa; he was vicar-general of the Observantine Franciscans, and enjoyed the special favour of Pope Sixtus IV. His book became the most popular, perhaps, of the many manuals of instruction for the clergy which were written in the 150 years before the Reformation.

Thiers, J. B. *Traité des superstitions qui regardent les sacrements*. 4th edn. Avignon, 1777.

The author, a learned French parish priest (1636-1703) wrote a number of volumes which show a wide study of sources. This particular volume was put upon the Index, though it would be difficult to point to anything in it which is not taken from orthodox medieval writers.

Thomas Cantimpratani. *Bonum universale de Apibus*. Douay, 1597.

The author, a Dominican friar and suffragan bishop (1201-70) is one of our best sources for thirteenth-century life. The book itself is almost impossible to procure; but a translation of all the anecdotes scattered through its pages, by Miss B. A. Lees, late History Tutor of Somerville College, Oxford, is now in preparation.

Thomas Wallensis (or Walleis). *Flores Omnium Pene Doctorum*. Leyden, 1575.

Thompson, A. Hamilton. *Visitations of Religious Houses in the Diocese of Lincoln*. (Lincoln Record Soc. vols. VII and XIV, 1914 and 1918.)

With full English translations and copious notes; by far the most scholarly editions of any monastic visitations that have yet been published.

Trithemius (Trithemius), J. *Opera*. Mainz, 1604.

One of our most valuable testimonies for the successes and failures of monastic reformers in the fifteenth century, by an abbot who played a prominent part in them and was one of the most learned men of his day.

Vacandard, E. *Vie de St-Bernard*. 2nd ed. 1897.

The best existing life of the saint.

Vincent of Beauvais. *Vincentii Bellocensis Speculum Quadruplex*. Douai, 1624.

Vincent ([1200]-1264) was librarian to St Louis of France, at whose request he drew up this, the greatest and most popular of medieval encyclopedias. The *Speculum Morale*, though printed as his, is by another sub-contemporary hand.

Viollet-le-Duc, E. *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'Architecture française*. 1854-68.

Contains, incidentally, a good deal of important matter for social history.

*Vitae Fratrum. Gerardi de Fracheto Vitae Fratrum O.P.*, ed. Reichert, B. M. Louvain, 1896.

A very valuable source for early Dominican history, answering roughly to the Franciscan *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals* and the Cistercian *Exordium Magnum*.

*Vitaspatrum. Vitae Patrum sive Historiae Eremiticae libri decem.* P.L. vols. 73 and 74.

Indispensable for the comprehension of the earliest monastic ideal and practice. The documents are by different authors of the fourth and fifth centuries; a Syriac redaction of this book is available in English (*The Paradise of the Fathers*, by E. A. Wallis Budge. Chatto and Windus, 1907). A very good selection is published in Italian by Sonzogno of Milan (Cavalca, *Vite de' Santi Padri*, pre-war price 1 lira).

Vitry, J. de. *Exempla*, ed. Crane, T. F. (Folk-Lore Society, vol. 26.) 1890.

The most valuable, perhaps, of all collections of preachers' anecdotes, but now out of print.

Wagner, G. *Untersuchungen ü. d. 'Standesverhältnisse elsässischer Klöster. I. Die Abtei Murbach.* Strassburg, 1911.

A valuable statistical study by a Protestant student.

Watkins, O. *History of Penance.* 1920.

Wilpert, J. *Fractio panis.* Freiburg i/B. 1895.

An excellent study of the earliest Eucharistic rites by a distinguished Roman Catholic scholar.

Winch. *Consuet. A Consuetudinary of the 14th century for the Refectory of St Swithin*, ed. Kitchin, G. W. 1886.

Valuable for the full comprehension of the next item.

Winch. *Ob. Rolls. Compotus Rolls of the Obedientiaries of St Swithin's Priory, Winchester*, ed. Kitchin, G. W. 1892.

Contains most important first-hand evidence as to monastic house-keeping, with excellent introduction and notes by the Dean of Winchester.

Winter, F. *Die Cistercienser des nordöstlichen Deutschlands.* 1868-71.

A very valuable study, based on a wide survey of original documents.

Workman, H. B. *The evolution of the monastic ideal.* 1913.

An excellent book within its self-imposed limitations; see appendix 1.

Wright, T. *St Patrick's Purgatory; essay on legends of Purgatory, Hell and Paradise.* 1844.

Ydens, S. *Historie van het H. Sacrament van Mirakelen.* Brussels, 1608.

A very curious chapter in superstition; Canon Ydens was the chief historian of the Miraculous Host of Brussels (appendix 11); but the book is now very rare.

Zedler, J. *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon.* Halle and Leipzig, 1733- .



## INTRODUCTION

*Opus aggredior opimum casibus*; monastic history is a dazzle of shifting lights and shadows. Of the first six abbots of Cluny, four were saints in deed as in name; but a detailed story of the *abbés commendataires* who held the French abbeys in 1789 would read like a studied satire on St Bernard and St Francis. Yet, if we may say that anything is possible in monasticism, we must not say that everything is true; the monk has scarcely more reason to complain of the enemies who have sought to render him odious, than of the indiscreet panegyrists who have often made him unreal, and therefore profoundly uninteresting to the generality of mankind. The only road to abiding interest in this singular chapter of history is to elicit from the records so many and such various words and deeds as may be presented without overcrowding the canvas. Among the mass of readers, there is enough healthy faith and enough healthy criticism to estimate, in the long run, how far any given historical presentment squares with the facts of life. Human nature is not altogether unchanging; but it does remain constant enough to justify the gospel of Descartes, that, even in complicated questions, every man's success in truth-seeking depends mainly on his wish to get at the truth.

It is now a little more than a quarter of a century since I began definitely collecting materials for this present attempt to revive a distant past; and some people tell me that it is a waste of time. To one man, all creeds are outworn; and he feels less interest in the religious past of Europe than in Buddhism or Shintoism. Another, on the contrary, will vehemently maintain that the faith of our fathers cannot be profitably approached but by those who claim to hold it still; a prohibition which, even if this assertion of complete continuity were true, would land us in the logical absurdity of abandoning Mormon history to the Mormons, Bolchevism to the Bolcheviks, and why not even botany to the plants? The historian must strive by closest eyesight to identify himself with the past; but this must always be a two-eyed vision also; half the truth lies in exact comparison,



which is impossible without some effort of detachment. If the medieval Church was a paradise in which man, though naked, was good and happy, let us seek to enter in again. If it was altogether detestable, let us shake the very dust of it from our feet. But if here, as elsewhere, we find much to admire and much to avoid, let us profit equally by both observations, and steer onwards into the future with that steadier course of men who keep every past landmark in view, and scan the whole horizon.

We seem to stand at a critical point today. The greatest histories of Greece and Rome were written by men who described their own times, or times so recent that oral evidence played a very prominent part. Modern historians, covering far wider fields, are almost altogether dependent upon documents; and, since these documents give a natural prominence to the men and the events which attracted most attention at the moment, therefore modern history has generally been political; kings and ministers, generals and diplomatists, fill nine-tenths of the stage. A far more laborious work, and in its beginnings far more imperfect, will be a real social history. The story of all Napoleon's genius and victories is worth infinitely less than that of the French peasant and artisan from 1789 to the present day; but the importance of this latter story is a true measure of its difficulty. A child may tell us who won at Marengo, how many men he lost and what prisoners he took, but who shall strike for us an equally clear and correct balance of Jacques Bonhomme's losses and gains since 1800? Cobbett and Carlyle, from very different points of view, complained with equal bitterness on this head; but it was easier to complain than to find the remedy. Even Carlyle was not able to carry the world much farther here, in default of those hundreds of predecessors who might have collected and systematized materials for him, if the tide had set earlier in that direction. That tide has been gathering force in the last thirty years; the man in the street does now ask more and more insistently for something deeper and wider than mere political history. Moreover, increasing numbers of thoughtful readers are now willing to spend time and money in support of the social historian who will give them documents as well as theories; and that is why I have ventured to devote these three

volumes to the story of men who, at their best, desired to be ignored by the world, and whom, at the worst, their own contemporaries would very gladly have ignored.

My title-page will have made it sufficiently clear that this volume deals mainly with Religion in the medieval sense, in which the "Religious" was the cloistered soul. That limitation is far less narrow than it might seem at first sight; for, at the beginning of our period at least, cloistered religion had earned its name *par excellence*; and no modern study of medieval piety could avoid putting it in the foreground. Moreover, it can claim one of the most prominent places in any general history of human creeds and worship; for it is one of the most striking examples, in all world-history, of institutional religion on a great scale—great both extensively and intensively, and therefore showing very plainly both the strength and the weakness of all efforts to embody the Unseen. Having dealt in these volumes, therefore, with the cloistered religion of the later Middle Ages, I hope to pass on later to a study of other religious currents during these five centuries. But my immediate task must, for some time, be concerned mainly with monasticism. I had hoped to publish my lectures within a few months of their delivery in 1910; but task has followed task with fresh claims of such immediate urgency that I have now held back for far more than the Horatian nine years. Time has strengthened all my main convictions; and my most serious misgivings are prompted by the necessarily fragmentary and discursive character of the work even as it now stands. Thus, however, I must publish, with such additions as have been possible during three years of broken leisure, or not at all: and this book will at least serve to indicate the lines of research and argument which need to be followed in any adequate history of monachism. I have already half completed a collection of original documents, mostly translated from the Latin, which may supply a body of *pièces justificatives* for the three volumes. Later, if life and leisure serve, I hope to take up part of this subject again in a series of separate studies which may utilize all the evidence I have collected from different sources, and supply a foundation for still fuller discussion by succeeding scholars. For, although the representations of some among my predecessors have forced me here and there to weight my pages

with what may seem a superfluity of documentary evidence, yet there is scarcely any point on which this represents more than a fraction of what could easily be produced. I hope, therefore, to leave my MS. collections and indexes for public use, where they may serve in some degree to shorten the labours of those who may find time to pursue any of these subjects more exhaustively than I can ever hope for myself.

The historian of monasticism has two fatal errors to avoid; he is lost if he fails to explain either why monks were once so many, or why they are now so few. The Religious Orders have been among the main forces of European civilization; at certain times and in certain places they may perhaps have been the greatest of all civilizing forces. Yet every government in Europe has gradually followed Henry VIII's example; and herein the State seems to express the mind of the individual, since adult vocations to the cloister are now extremely rare, among men at least. The system has never had more passionate panegyrists than Kenelm Digby and Montalembert; yet neither took his own creed seriously in practice. It is the aim of the present writer to keep these contrasts continually in view, and never to state the one truth so as to exclude the other. How far he has succeeded, the public must decide.

What then, in briefest outline, is the story of these five hundred years? Beginning our more detailed study in the eleventh century, on the full tide of a great and progressive age, we shall find our Western monks marshalled nominally in a vast world-institution—an institution in which the Abbot's authority secures unity within the cloister; the Bishop's or Archbishop's within the diocese or the province; and the Pope's over all. Yet a close study shows much of the same irregularities which St Benedict had found in the earlier monachism. The monk still was indispensable to the society of the eleventh century; yet there was a great gulf between the average monk and his Rule; the salt was sorely needed, yet it had lost too much of its savour; *nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te*. Here and there, as at Lanfranc's and Anselm's Bec, the growth was pure and vigorous; but in most places it was half-choked with the weeds

of those wild centuries which are justly called the Dark Ages. Monasticism, perhaps the least feudal of medieval institutions, had gradually taken a strong tinge of feudalism; it had wrapped itself more closely, from generation to generation, in the cloak of worldly property and privilege, which even threatened to become hereditary. This is what we find even in the eleventh century; but then comes the great Cistercian movement with its kindred and contemporary reforms; thence we shall pass on to the Franciscan-Dominican revival; after which begins a slow cooling and settlement of this vast cenobitic sea. Popes and Councils prove powerless to move it to any general or steady purpose; gusts of reform pass like catspaws over the face of the waters without stirring their deeper stagnation; little by little, society begins to lose faith and patience; an age of partial and tentative disendowment begins; and then, when the slow currents have gathered unity of direction and, from that unity, a ten-fold force—then, at last, comes the great revolution. For many centuries these men's wealth had exposed them to the greed of princes and capitalists. In Chaucer's day, the people themselves had plainly begun to find the monk less necessary; God was more evidently deserting the cloister. Little more than a century later, in More's day, the conjuncture only awaited some prince strong enough in his own self-will and in the general obedience of his people, needy and covetous enough to dare much in any case for money; and driven now by legitimate political necessities to dare still more. If anything can be called inevitable in history, this is that inevitable thing. National feeling had grown so strongly between 1300 and 1500—even, to some extent, national church-feeling—that all the materials for a conflagration existed already. Sooner or later, even though Henry VIII had never lived, some powerful prince must have found himself under Henry's financial and political temptations to defy the Pope; and that fight must have been to the death. At any time, the monks were certain to take the Papal side more or less directly; that is one of the few points on which Catholics and Protestants are completely agreed. A monasticism richer in spiritual gifts than in worldly possessions would certainly have decided the struggle in the Pope's favour; but now this wealthy and senescent institution brought him little spiritual help, while it opened a fatal

breach on his flank. Here was every temptation to the spoiler; abundant booty almost unprotected by God or man; even Mary could not dream seriously of undoing more than a small fraction of her father's work of spoliation. This Reformation tragedy has been told often enough; Froude has presented one side; Dixon, Gasquet and Gairdner the other<sup>1</sup>; the net result of these pleadings has been very ably summed up by A. F. Pollard and H. A. L. Fisher. That last fight is as dramatic and familiar as the battle of Waterloo; but nobody has yet attempted to trace the obscure currents of history which led up to it; or to show how steadily, and in general how unsuspectingly, that vast army which had held Europe at its feet marched on from day to day towards its ineluctable fate. In the thirteenth century, a world without monks would have seemed as impossible as a world of monks would seem to us in the twentieth; and it is absurd to suppose that we owe this difference to two men, Luther and Henry VIII. The object of the present book is to describe, however summarily, the life and work of those myriads of nameless cloisterers who were so naturally dominant in the Middle Ages, and by whose own choice it has come about, if indeed man is in any sense master of his own and others' fate, that their successors count for so little in the world around us. Some future day, when modern differences on easily-ascertainable matters of fact shall have been adjusted by patient research and mutual candour; when at last historical students shall be as fully agreed on all main questions of Reformation history as they are already upon all main problems of the Great Rebellion, it will then be seen that the last few centuries of medieval monachism develope a tragedy, in the Greek sense, almost as striking as that of the fall of imperial Rome. Its keynote is inevitable retribution—*denn alle Schuld rächt sich auf Erden*. We mark, on a broad canvas, the virtues of the virtuous, the vices of the villains, and the listless drift of the majority. We see the *eipaveia*, the fate as certain as it is unseen; the great wave of history swells suddenly up to a still greater climax, and thence onward in a downward sweep which tells its tale as plainly as the upward curve. Those who suffered

<sup>1</sup> See, however, Gairdner's important retractions in *The Nineteenth Century and After* for July, 1909. Fisher's summary, however judicial, is affected by his unfamiliarity with some important aspects of medieval life.

most under Henry VIII were often the least guilty in themselves; men burdened with a fatal inheritance. For the London Carthusians and the Friars Observant, for dignified and respectable old men like the Abbot of Glastonbury, the least sympathetic student will find the same regrets as for those who innocently suffered the Theban woe, "curse upon curse, pang upon pang...helpless."

And yet, sad as was the fate of many noble figures in the sixteenth century, the slower tragedy of the epigoni was more painful, without the same dramatic effect. To follow French monasticism in detail from the Reformation to the Revolution is mainly a study in morbid tissues, which even the Benedictines of St-Maur cannot wholly redeem. The whole lesson of this institution, with its greatness and its littlenesses, can be learnt from the five last centuries of the Middle Ages. Documents are abundant for the whole period, and the organism itself, as yet, is unmarred by any violent interruption of growth.

This, then, is the bare chart of our coming journey; but everything depends upon the traveller's own eyes, and the disposition which he brings to this task of exploration. "Seek, and ye shall find," is as true in history as in religion. An ably-conducted paper like *The Church Times*, representing a large professional public which claims in a very special sense to rest upon an historical basis, complains of "the darkness which conceals the medieval monk and nun from us as successfully as it hides the early inhabitants of Mashonaland and Yucatan"<sup>1</sup>. But this, so far as it is true at all, is chargeable to the very men who, in our own days, complain of it most bitterly. The ignorance, so far as it exists, comes not from misfortune but from perversity. It is not that time has devoured all but an insignificant wreckage of the actual documentary evidence, but that those who profess the greatest interest in medieval monasticism, and who claim it as their special province in history, do in fact shrink disloyally from facing the vast mass of records, partly through indolence but mainly through fear to face unwelcome truths. They persistently ignore these documents whose very survival they regret; the key of knowledge they have taken away; they

<sup>1</sup> June 30, 1922, p. 695, col. 4.

themselves have not entered in, and those that were entering in they have hindered<sup>1</sup>.

Monastic historiography has a very curious history of its own; there were giants in the seventeenth century, but these have had no true successors. Mabillon and his fellow-workers of the Congregation of St-Maur laid the foundations, but the foundations only, of what might have been one of the most important contributions ever made to social history. The *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedicti* never got beyond 1100 A.D., nor the *Annales Ordinis S. Benedicti* beyond 1120, even reckoning the supplementary matter which Martène drew from Mabillon's papers. But it is only at the point where Mabillon and Martène were stopped by death that the real wealth of intimate documents begins. The Cistercian General Chapter Statutes, extending almost continuously from 1134 to 1547, supply a steady thread of evidence such as we lack altogether for the preceding centuries; and these Cistercian records are supplemented in the next century by similar, though less perfectly preserved, Chapter Acts of the Dominicans, Franciscans, Cluniacs, Benedictines and Austin Canons. About the same time, monastic chronicles become far fuller and more explicit; Jocelin of Brakelond, the chronicles of Evesham and Meaux, the Lives of the Abbots of St Albans, may be paralleled by a large number of equally intimate records from France, Belgium, Italy and Germany. In the middle of the thirteenth century, the Diary of Odo Rigaldi gives us such a statistical view of monasticism throughout the whole diocese of Rouen (and, in a lesser degree, throughout the whole province) as we get neither earlier nor later in the whole Middle Ages; and Rouen was a typical well-managed diocese. Henceforward visitatorial documents become far more abundant; at first, we get detailed injunctions dealing with specific matters needing emendation at particular monasteries; then, with the fifteenth century, we often have the actual preliminary evidence given by monks and nuns to their visitors, upon which episcopal injunctions were afterwards based. It is probable that about half these documents

<sup>1</sup> The brief monographs published in French and German are often excellent so far as they go, but seldom help us far towards a general synthesis. Moreover, such as they are, they have been almost altogether ignored by writers in the English language.

are still in MS.; but it needs years of study to master even those which are already printed. We are often able to check and illustrate these depositions from contemporary account-rolls, deeds of gift or sale, or customals prescribing the details of common life in particular monasteries. With the fifteenth century come also a few Visitors' Manuals, the invaluable autobiography of one Visitor (Johann Busch) and the diaries of two others (Ambrogio Traversari and Abbot Martin of Vienna). Abbot Trithem's sermons and disciplinary writings show us clearly how much reformers had achieved in the latter half of the century, and how much they had failed to achieve; priceless evidence of the same kind comes from France, where a double current of orthodox reforming effort provoked counterpleas from the conservative side also. Meanwhile, from the thirteenth century onwards, we have a fairly continuous series of similar disciplinary treatises, of criticisms from heretics and replies by monastic apologists; these become increasingly frequent and plain-spoken as the Reformation draws near. In the Reformation period itself, we have very illuminating reports from the papal Visitor Felician Ninguarda, which go far to corroborate the medieval evidence. Equally illuminating are the records of still later reformers—Cardinal Richelieu in France, Scipione de' Ricci in Italy, and Joseph II's Visitors in Austria; these show us how the strength and the weakness of monachism are alike bound up with essential elements in the different Rules; so that the same system produced very similar fruits in all places and at all times. When we consider also the vast literature which bears less directly upon this great institution—the works of satirists and panegyrists; casual references in non-monastic chronicles; books of canon law; judicial and political documents; papal petitions and, above all, synodal or conciliar decrees—when all these are taken into account, it must be admitted that even the prodigious erudition of a Mabillon laid only the foundations of monastic history. As a contemporary remarked who honoured him, Mabillon knew from the seventh century to the eleventh admirably, but his knowledge was practically limited to those five hundred years<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, vast as Mabillon's know-

<sup>1</sup> "Still we may readily credit the words of Abbé de Longuerue, one of the savants who used to frequent the Sunday afternoon reunions at St-Germain



ledge was, he was not always free to say what he knew. We must not only remember his natural bias, shown in such discussions as that on the Benedictine schools in one of the introductions (saec. III, i, § iv) of his *Acta Sanctorum*, and in a few other places where strict impartiality would scarcely have been human. For, beyond this, he had to reckon with his monastic superiors and with the Roman hierarchy. He very narrowly escaped the Index for having dared to expose a few of the falsehoods current in his day about certain popular saints; he got into serious trouble for repudiating certain Augustinian treatises which are now universally admitted to be spurious, and for having held the balance honestly, in his preface, between the Jansenists and the Ultramontanes, each of whom claimed Augustine's authority<sup>1</sup>. In his edition of Petrus de Cella, he was compelled to cut out the greater part of that preface in which he had ventured to draw attention to the evidence which Petrus supplies for monastic decay in the later twelfth century<sup>2</sup>. It may safely be asserted that, if his life had been prolonged far enough to bring his *Annales* well into the thirteenth century, he would never have been permitted to print Odo Rigaldi's Diary with such com-

des Prés. 'Le Père Mabillon,' says he, 'savait fort bien le 7, le 8, le 9, le 10 et le 11 siècles; mais il ne savoit rien ni en deçà, ni au-delà.' Non omnia possumus omnes; and seeing that it has become rather the fashion to speak in an offhand way of Mabillon's 'almost unbounded learning' it is well to keep before our eyes this corrective from the mouth of a thoroughly capable as well as shrewd, if somewhat erratic, observer." Abbot E. C. Butler, in *Downside Review*, 1893, p. 123. Cf. *Mélanges Mabillon*, 1908, p. 261: "He had left scarcely any materials for the twelfth and succeeding centuries."

<sup>1</sup> E. de Broglie, *Mabillon*, II, 211 ff.; cf. E. C. Butler, *Benedictine Monachism*, pp. 341 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Mélanges Mabillon*, pp. 101 ff. His private protest to the President of the Congregation of St-Maur, printed for the first time in this modern collection, shows on the one hand how clearly he recognized the folly, apart from the guilt, of such suppressions, and on the other, the absolute powerlessness of this greatest specialist of his day in the hands of the hierarchy. He writes: "[This suppression] condemns not only Petrus de Cella, but also St Bernard, Peter Damian, the Venerable Bede and all the great men of our Order who have deplored its disorders... It is certain that our best means of stopping our adversaries' mouths is that we should ourselves condemn, in advance, all that is or has been found irregular in our Order... If we cut out this passage alone from our Preface, our adversaries themselves, who will read this passage in the author's text, will have reason to complain of our insincerity, in that, while noting his zeal for everything else, we dissemble his zeal for the Order in order to spare ourselves." Since, therefore, he was not suffered to tell the truth on this point, he cut out all his reflections on Peter's personal character; i.e. more than half his preface.

ments as the document would have suggested to his straightforward mind. The later history of monachism could scarcely have been written by monks alone; and, in fact, later monks have scarcely even attempted it. The bulk of modern encomiasts have practically adopted Dupanloup's motto, "surtout, méfiez-vous des sources"; or even Cardinal Manning's still more reactionary maxim that the appeal to history is a treason and a heresy<sup>1</sup>. Nine-tenths of all that has been written since Mabillon's time really goes back to Mabillon, directly or indirectly. The vast wealth of documents between St Bernard and the Reformation is practically non-existent for modern historians. Mr A. Hamilton Thompson, by translating and annotating only two volumes of the Lincoln Visitations with true scholarly care, and Miss Power in her *Medieval English Nunneries*, have given intelligent readers more light upon the actual monachism with which Henry VIII had to deal, than Montalembert gave in that bulky book which owes all its historical value to Mabillon, ending practically where Mabillon ends, and tricking out Mabillon's sober and solid conclusions with a rhetoric which is not always even sincere. For Montalembert, like Kenelm Digby, was "heart-broken" when his own daughter took him at his word and went into a convent<sup>2</sup>. In Digby's case, the decision caused an almost life-long estrangement; yet Digby had been an even more enthusiastic panegyrist than Montalembert. His *Mores Catholici*, delightful to read, has only the slenderest claims to history. It is a common-place book of extracts from contemporary and non-contemporary writers, heaped together without critical discrimination or even historical sequence, and not always accurately translated. Newman's monastic essays have the charm and sincerity of his best writings; but Newman would frankly have confessed his dependence on secondary authorities; he took his history mainly from such sources as the prefaces to Mabillon's *Acta Sanctorum*, but he had not Mabillon's width of horizon to guide him<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Daily Telegraph* for Oct. 8, 1875 (an explanation even more illuminating than the original words on p. 226 of Manning's *Temporal Mission of the Holy Ghost*); *Acton's Correspondence*, ed. Figgis and Laurence, I (1917), 50.

<sup>2</sup> B. Holland, *Memoir of Kenelm Digby*, 1919, pp. 163 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix I.

These three volumes, therefore, represent an attempt to grapple with the neglected evidence of the last five medieval centuries; and, however imperfectly, a pioneer attempt. Disconnected as my original lectures were, and obvious as the gaps will be even now, I believe them to represent the first serious struggle to narrate the story of the monastic centuries from all kinds of contemporary documents. Having striven to tell the truth, I welcome criticism from other students who can convict me either of mis-stating facts or of ignoring essential evidence. On the other hand, let those who disagree with me deign at least to face my facts; for this is my main reason for publishing now, when the general public is in a mood to demand facts, whether pleasant or unpleasant. I cannot flatter myself that my interpretation of the documents is final; but, on the other hand, I am convinced that no man will venture henceforth to ignore the vast mass of first-hand evidence for monastic life which lies at the feet of all scholars who deign to stoop and make use of it. Good monks of today, if they would only see it, are even more truly concerned than other men to face these records which have come down to us from good monks in the past. We all see now, what Sir Thomas More could not really deny when it was pressed upon him in argument, loyally as he tried to defend ecclesiastical traditions, that the most fatal policy for anybody is the policy of Eli towards his sons<sup>1</sup>. The ecclesiastical authorities of the early sixteenth century were mainly striving, as they had striven for centuries past, to gloss over the faults of their weaker brethren; they thus left no room for any but catastrophic reform. The sense of solidarity is apt to deaden the sense of personal responsibility: a man will do for The Cause what he would not dream of doing for private profit. If the modern world is often equally unjust on the other side—if our walls are placarded with caricatures of bibulous monks by way of advertisement for this man's beer or that man's whisky—this is partly because even honest monks have not yet repudiated methods of advocacy which violate the plainest canons of literary rectitude. We shall never kill error but by a general agreement in favour of better

<sup>1</sup> More's *Apology*, chap. xliii. It is evident that More is compelled to recognize a great deal of truth in the accusations of St-Germain. For the accusations see Chaps. xvi and xvii of this volume, and volumes II and III.

things; the homage to truth must not be one-sided, but reciprocal. Medieval history in general, and monastic history in especial, are still halting at that rudimentary stage where no man can hope to get a bird's-eye view from the heights that stand above all controversy. Therefore we of the present generation can best serve the public by plea and counter-plea; and we can even serve ourselves best, in the long run, by laying all our cards frankly upon the table.



## CHAPTER I

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MONASTICISM

THE root-problem of monasticism is one which every ideal has to face; we could not get rid of it by suppressing Christianity, or even Theism, tomorrow. The formal State, and the formal conventions of any healthy society, are necessary and satisfactory up to a certain point; but a very small dose of idealism soon brings us beyond that point. This ideal need not be religious, in the ordinary sense of the term; pacifism and militant free-thought have to make very much the same choice which lay before the early monk. Can we best serve our higher aim by crystallizing into a society within Society, and so cutting ourselves off from the contagion of the un-ideal multitude? Or is it a braver and more effectual choice to keep full touch with the rest, always conforming so far as conformity is morally permissible, and hoping gradually to leaven the world by constant intercourse? The modern idealist generally makes the latter choice; the monk made the former. This contrast invites criticism, but gives no excuse for mere off-hand judgement; we cannot decide on the easy principle that our own later and higher civilization must needs be better informed than our remote ancestors. It is very possible that each has chosen rightly in his own way, and that the different solutions have been legitimately conditioned by widely different circumstances. I hope to deal more fully with this problem in a later and more comprehensive volume; meanwhile it is enough to hint here that time has not essentially changed this riddle of life, but only stated it in fresh terms. The very refusal to choose is, in itself, a choice.

And, if the monk's main problem comes home very nearly to us, so also do the details of his daily life. The Great War has made many men regard collectivism with new eyes; and history may now count upon more general sympathy towards that ancient form of collective effort. For monachism is not only one of the most resolute of those ventures of faith

which, through victory or through failure, have created the world we live in, and which are destined to make better worlds for our children and their descendants; it is also one of the greatest of world-pageants; one of the most dramatic episodes in the long *Légende des Siècles*. Even the Dark Ages of monachism have a gloomy grandeur of their own; "thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; . . . and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace." It is a chapter of history which may often be misread, but will never be forgotten. The artist still draws some of his highest inspiration directly from monastic architecture; indirectly, modern landscape owes almost as much to our ruined abbeys; Wordsworth and Turner take us inevitably to Bolton; Girtin to Kirkstall; Scott to Melrose. And, to the psychologist, there is a rich mine in monastic meditation, from its most refined forms in the *Imitatio* down to the primitive fetishism of the *Miracles de St-Benoît*, or of similar collections where the *homme moyen sensuel* of the Middle Ages frankly reveals his inner mind to posterity. From such ordinary folk, whose ideas reflect the average of their own age, and who offend, even while they interest, the average of ours, the hero-worshipper may look up and away to saints like St Bernard or St Francis, and take heart from them as Matthew Arnold took heart from the memory of his father.

Here I must speak of myself; it is better to be frankly personal where we feel strongly; that which has inspired a life-long interest in one case is the more likely to chime in with some other man's tastes; and the public even permits us to be fondly garrulous, so long as we can avoid the *genre ennuyeux*. Doubtless there are things monastic which only a monk can fully conceive; and that is the abiding value of such a book as Abbot Butler's. But most men feel it even more important to understand something of monachism in general as a factor in world-history, and something of the individual monk as a fellow-man differing from themselves in type, but not in essential humanity; a man whom in one sense we shall never know, as we shall never know even our own friends;—"the heart knoweth his own bitterness, and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his grief,"—but whom we may yet observe with pleasure and profit, as we

watch those whom we meet daily in the flesh. Now, for the monk's place in world-history the monk himself is as interested a witness as is the Englishman or the Frenchman when it comes to a question of England's or France's place among other nations. There is no monastic historian who, for learning and impartiality, comes even into the same class as Mabillon; yet Mabillon's logic breaks down at once when he comes to the question of monastic services to education, for which he found such sweeping claims and so little evidence; and, again, he consented without a struggle to the suppression of a preface in which he had ventured to expatiate on the services of a great medieval Benedictine in the cause of monastic reform<sup>1</sup>. Mabillon tacitly admitted the right of his superiors to conceal the fact that reform had been sorely needed; and therefore it is well that monastic history should sometimes be written by men free from this temptation, even though they have their own temptations to ignore some facts and over-emphasize others. From the non-monastic, as from the monastic historian of monachism, the public asks only two things, that he should labour lovingly at his subject, and that he should give the reader ungrudgingly of all that he seems to have found. And the present writer, who never lived inside a monastery in the body, has never been far from them in thought. I was born under the shadow of the Greyfriars' tower at Lynn; bred in that Nar valley which once had fifteen cloisters in five-and-twenty miles, and has thence been called "the Holy Land of Norfolk"; and schooled within daily sight of Chaucer's Dunmow. My first schoolboy essay was an attempt to arouse interest in these things; and during the last 20 years my main accumulations of notes have been monastic. Our interests are rightly conditioned not only by intrinsic, but also by proportional values. The mind has its own law of relativity; we cannot all be always spending all our enthusiasm upon just those things which happen most directly to touch the life of our time; we are rightly influenced also by the chance which casts some particular fragment of world-truth upon our own path; or, again, by other men's neglect of or injustice to our own hobby—things which move

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. III, i, praef. § iv; L. Delisle in *Mélanges Mabillon*, 1908, pp. 101-2.



#### 4 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MONASTICISM

not only our selfish but also our disinterested nature. Interest gradually becomes absorption; we wake up at last to find ourselves head over ears in love; the statue has come to life, all the more adorable because it is our own and not another's; we feel the full force of Sappho's *οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον*—

Like the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough  
A-top on the topmost twig, which the pluckers forgot somehow—  
Forgot it not, nay, but got it not, for none could get it till now.

There must come a time in every student's life when he feels intensely the need of further restraint and concentration; many earlier interests must be sacrificed; "entsagen sollst du, sollst entsagen, das ist der ewige Gesang." Happy are those who, as they grow old with the object of their desire, can say daily, "Time cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety"; and in this subject there is infinite variety; for monachism, during ten centuries, was an epitome of European life. All kinds of natures drifted into the cloister; all sorts of ambitions took root there; every virtue flourished, and every sort of weed grew up among the wheat. There is no imaginable scene, tragic or comic, that was not or might not have been played on that stage; and, although every marked exception was thus possible, yet here, as in the outside world, the normal was humdrum and commonplace. The real background was grey: there is no excuse, with all the documents before us, for those who would paint it dead black or dazzling white. But here, as in our own lives, we can keep the grey in its place as a background, and cast our main light upon those threads of black and white and rainbow colours which combine to make the distinctive pattern of the tapestry. Thus conceived, the cloister-life of those ten centuries shows a motley crowd, stately in its distant and slow procession before our eyes; a crowd in which even the grotesque is tempered by distance, and all too glaring contrasts are merged in the magic mists of time. Strain as we will, peer as we may through alternate telescope and microscope, we are almost as much tantalized as fascinated by what we see<sup>1</sup>. If Emanuel Deutsch had lived to three-score years and ten, he might still have mourned as he

<sup>1</sup> I make no exception here for modern monastic writers, whose manner of life is in many ways so different from St Bernard's, that they often find it as hard to reach the true perspective as Protestants do. A good deal of this

mourned when the cancer ate out his life on the threshold of maturity, that fate had slit his thread just when the real Past was beginning to unfold itself to his view<sup>1</sup>. But, shadowy and elusive as the vision is, it haunts us all the more persistently; we are always wooing, never sated with fruition; more and more, as time wears on, we live side by side with this reflection of our own mind upon the mists of the past. It is a double life, a double self:

Partout où j'ai voulu dormir . . .  
Sur ma route est venu s'asseoir  
Un malheureux vêtu de noir  
Qui me ressemblait comme un frère<sup>2</sup>.

How many of us, long before the Great War, had seen that catastrophe dimly as a distant and melancholy pageant! In France, in Germany, we were holiday-makers, but our bedroom windows had trembled to a steady, monotonous pulsation; and we had known, without waking, that this was the night-march of some great division in the autumn manoeuvres. The procession, half heard, half felt, weaves itself into the traveller's dreams, and long persists as a steady undertone to all he hears or thinks in daytime—this tramp, tramp, tramp of thousands and tens of thousands, each with a soul of his own, but also with that collective army-soul which lends such a mysterious significance to their midnight defilade. The same feeling came upon us all tenfold, with a choking at the throat, in the latter months of 1914, when the village street pulsed for hours under the footfall of endless columns marching to the tune of *Tipperary*, and every face was different under the same uniform, and the may be realized by reading between the lines of that apologetic chapter in Abbot Butler's *Benedictine Monachism*, pp. 368–83. I have dealt with a similar subject in *The Hibbert Journal* for Jan. 1921, pp. 326 ff.

<sup>1</sup> "I work hard; but often I am on the brink of giving up. To resuscitate a time which perhaps after all had better remain dead, is a rash task. Who knows? perhaps after all I may be only and really in a dream, while I fancy I see golden towers and palaces gleaming in the dark blue depths, streets and market places crowded with a motley crew—Roman, Greek, Byzantine, Jewish, Indian, and the rest—and hearing the vague, wild hum of strange dead voices, and seeing above all the weird strained look in their eyes which prays and implores unceasingly—Redeem us! You remember the 'Doctor, sind Sie des Teufels?' with which the Captain caught hold of Heine's boots as he was leaning over the 'Schiffsrand,' looking downwards!" (*Literary Remains of Emanuel Deutsch*, 1874, p. xiii.)

<sup>2</sup> A. de Musset, *Nuit de Décembre*.

## 6 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MONASTICISM

same shadow hung over every soul of that innumerable multitude: *Morituri te salutant*. That pageant of those who were going to die, familiar now to every town and village, has quickened our sympathies for the eternal pageant of those who are dead. In distant history, those ghosts of the past march onwards to a battle which was fought for us; with their stripes we are healed; on one side, their victory points us the way; on another their defeat stands as our danger-signal; the world could not have been what it is, if these dead men had not fought and bled. By attraction or by repulsion, their minds have done more to colour ours than we generally acknowledge; they not only thought many of our thoughts for us, but coined hundreds of the words we use in daily life. *Quisque suos patimur manes*; and, in the life of mind and spirit, that paradox of the *Religio Medici* may be literally defended:

"Before Abraham was, I am," is the saying of Christ; yet is it true in some sense, if I say it of myself; for I was not only before myself but Adam; that is, in the idea of God, and the decree of that synod held from all eternity. And in this sense, I say, the world was before the creation, and at the end before it had a beginning; and thus was I dead before I was alive; though my grave be England, my dying place was paradise, and Eve miscarried of me before she conceived of Cain.

Moreover, something like monasticism haunts us potentially even at the present moment. If the Russian horror were to sweep now over the whole civilized world, it is probable that the first attempts at reconstruction, as soon as some sort of crystallization became possible, would include something nearly analogous to medieval monasticism. A few men would retire into their own souls, living even on roots and water for the sake of living the free life of the spirit; a few would begin, others would follow, and groups would form within the great class-dictatorship. Some rudimentary notions of science, letters and art would survive in these communities, to germinate again in happier times; the literature, the art, and even the science of a remote posterity would owe gratitude to them; and no man of culture would be disinterested in their history. Why, then, should the modern world so far neglect the men who saved these fragments from the wreck of Greek and Roman civilization, that

we may almost say of them what Hallam says of another medieval association; "The curious subject of Freemasonry has unfortunately been treated of only by panegyrists or calumniators, both equally mendacious"<sup>1</sup>?

The heroism of the great Religious becomes more comprehensible in proportion as we visualize the ordinary monk or friar or nun. Though Newman was not a monk in the strictest technical sense (for the Oratorians are a secular congregation), yet his life illustrates monastic vocation and conversion more vividly, perhaps, than any other modern book. He was an accomplished musician and violinist; his palate was so delicate that he was made official wine-taster for the cellars of his Oxford college; his letters from abroad show a wonderful sense of form and colour; he apprehends and describes with an effortless accuracy which puts him absolutely in the first rank. All these things he seems to have subordinated, early and completely, to what he felt an incomparably higher vocation. He broke a stubborn and masterful will to obedience, and often to the pettiest obedience, though here the struggle was life-long and never, perhaps, completely victorious<sup>2</sup>. St Bernard, again, was born and bred for human society; he had every personal and intellectual charm. Though he chose to make himself unobservant of natural beauty for what seemed Christ's sake, yet his very sermons show a keenness of observation and (where necessary) of satire which tell their own tale of struggle and renunciation. Nor did the choice seem as simple to those men, perhaps, as it seems to their modern panegyrists who pitch the note of admiration upwards and upwards till it reaches a falsetto. We can see the final triumph of the dead saint's ideal; but we are apt to forget his own inevitable doubts and misgivings; St Bernard himself, though his mind was one of the serenest, was vividly conscious of the temptation to welcome as divine truth that which was really devilish falsehood. Even in the Middle Ages, Religious must sometimes have doubted not only of final perseverance (as they constantly confess) but also, to some extent, even of wisdom in their choice. They must have

<sup>1</sup> *Middle Ages*, ch. ix, pt. ii, note. (Ward, Lock and Co.'s ed. p. 641.)

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Acton's *Correspondence*, ed. Figgis and Laurence, pp. 76, 82.

asked not only: "Need I give up so much?" but even: "Is it right to look upon the abandonment of some of these things as a sacrifice to God?" With all their worship of celibacy, the best of them generally recognized the value of married life; they were not blind to parental love; they saw the natural innocence and beauty of many "worldly" relations and enjoyments; and they knew how truly a man may give praise to God as he tastes them. They do not often put these things into plain words; they would perhaps not even have frankly confessed so much to themselves; yet something of the bitterness which we often find in the very sweetest of these ascetic natures—the 22nd chapter, for instance, of the 1st book of the *Imitatio*—suggest that the writer is crying aloud in order to deaden his own pangs; that he does not always float in a serene sense of victory over evil, but needs to work himself up into artificial indignation against that which he is now professionally pledged to hate, yet which God in the beginning may have formed him to love. The Religious sometimes gives the World the go-by not in the lofty indifference of impenetrable armour, but seamed with soul-scars that are still tender to the lightest touch of memory, and with a conscience not altogether free from suggestions of treachery towards things which the Almighty had created and found very good:

respiciens udis prodita luminibus.

Behind the dullest of these monastic records there lurks tragedy, in the fullest dramatic sense of the word—the inspiration of human endeavour and endurance,—and pity for all that human flesh and nerves must suffer in the struggle<sup>1</sup>—and sympathy with those far more pitiable figures who despaired sooner or later as we ourselves might well have despaired, and who sank into self-confessed failure. Thousands were sincerely converted in the spirit, yet not in the flesh; they remained unrefinedly and almost unrepentantly fond of all merriment and good cheer and good fellowship; but such men, even through their lapses, bear true witness to the immensity of their ordinary sacrifice, as the

<sup>1</sup> Often we find medieval saints echoing to God that cry from the book of Job, "Is my strength the strength of stones, or is my flesh of brass?" Abbot Butler (p. 56) seems not to recognize this as a biblical quotation.

death of the common private is often more significant than the officer's.

We shall see presently how St Benedict conceived of monastic life as a warfare; and thus, again, it may be easier now to understand the monk's mind than it was ten years ago. Most of us believe that these saints would have been ideally better without their asceticism<sup>1</sup>; yet we need not, on that account, be dominated by a regretful sense of waste. From most points of view, what waste could have been more heartrending than that of our best and brightest youth in the earliest stages of this War? Ideally, it would have been infinitely better that all this young intellect and energy should have been organized in time of peace to prevent war; if all young men under thirty had been capable of working wholeheartedly for ten years in favour of the League of Nations, they alone could have carried it through against all opposition from their elders. But, practically, human inconsistency and improvidence being what it is among young and old, this abominable waste of life has made the world see what even "advanced thinkers" refused to see before; and the self-sacrifice of these thousands, which in other circumstances would have been culpable rashness, has in this case ministered to our salvation. Those who are now working hardest to make war impossible do also, in most cases, feel most keenly the grandeur of the young men's sacrifice; and similarly, however we may aspire to create a world in which professional monachism may be out of date, this should not blind us to what has been done for humanity by the self-denial of monks in the past. If the monastic legend in many ways resembles the Napoleonic legend—if we have had too many blind admirers on the one side, and too many on the other who could never think of the "Corsican Ogre" with patience—time has brought its remedy in both cases. The public is now sincerely anxious to hear the truth, for good or for evil, in so far as the truth can be sifted out from the mass of surviving documents.

The word is here used in its ordinary modern sense. But Abbot Butler in his fourth chapter protests, with a certain amount of justice, against the indiscriminate use of the word in a disadvantageous sense. He himself, however, leaves considerable excuse for misunderstanding when he defines it as "some set efforts at self-denial and spiritual achievement beyond what is required in order to work out our salvation" (p. 36).

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF MONASTICISM

MONASTICISM, as the very word proclaims, was concerned originally with separate and sporadic vocations; it was not a collectivist, but an individualist movement. In every generation, exceptional men have realized with startling force a truth which belongs really to all generations. It has come suddenly home to them that, in the strictest sense of the word, they do not live in a Christian land; that no nation has ever followed wholeheartedly after Christ; nor, if we chose to shake all our native dust from the soles of our feet, could we find a Christian land elsewhere on the globe. It is not only that good men and women, in this twentieth century, habitually regard the Sermon on the Mount in a spirit less of fervent discipleship than of distant toleration. Everywhere we find some men casting doubt upon doctrines which others count as cardinal truths of the Christian creed; and, as a very earnest and thoughtful Anglican has recently expressed it: "There are no longer grounds for believing that the Western world is Christian now in a sense in which it was not in the period immediately preceding the peace of the Church under Constantine the Great"<sup>1</sup>.

Although this difficulty strikes each generation with fresh force, it is a problem as old as Christianity itself. In the present century divergences of belief may preponderate, as they did in the earliest generations; in the Dark and Middle Ages men may have been less distressed by constant and articulate doctrinal doubts than by the contrast between the confessed creed and the actual conduct of average Christendom. But both elements of discord have always been strong; in no generation could men be true Christians by mere birth without conscious re-birth; and monachism represents not only one of the earliest roads towards regeneration, but also one of the broadest and most frequented. Its importance in the history of civilization is independent, to a great extent, of creed or doctrine. It is difficult to contest the historical fact, whether we like it or not, that

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Figgis, *Civilisation at the Cross-Roads*, 1913, p. 29.

Christianity has influenced the world more than any other event in history; and that monachism was, for ten centuries at least, one of the most characteristic of Christian manifestations. It was the inevitable logical outcome of one conception of Christ's message; and, though no creed can fairly be pressed by its opponents to its extreme logical implications—though we must always try to understand a religion as it is understood and practised by its adherents—yet, in cases where it is they themselves who have drawn certain extreme conclusions both in theory and in practice, such conclusions are among the most instructive data of social history. In them, we see the ideal writ large, and can study the full development of all that was merely embryonic in the original theory. To compare the static with the dynamic conception of Christianity, we must look closely into monastic history.

During this last generation, since the Church made peace with Darwinism, we are all more or less ready to conceive our creed dynamically. Newman's doctrine of Development preached evolution in religion even before Darwin preached it in biology; and practically all theologians now accept that doctrine; the differences are only of degree. Many Anglo-Catholic theologians of today, quite naturally, treat the Old Testament on the same principles of interpretation which their modernist opponents apply to the New Testament and to the records of the sub-apostolic age. It is conceded on all hands that immense changes have taken place during the nineteen Christian centuries; orthodox and heterodox differ only in their estimate of the gradual or catastrophic nature of these changes. To the orthodox, all real Christianity of today is a single vast tree whose every leaf and fibre lay hid in the single seed sown by Christ; nothing is true but what springs directly from that one grain. To the modernist, the evolution is rather that of a succession of crops grown on changing soils and under the most diverse climatic conditions. Each fresh succession has sprung, essentially, from that single seed; but there has been cross-fertilization; there have been strange new developments and equally startling re-versions to type; the laws of evolution have even produced new Christian species; yet all these were implied from the first; all are legitimate, so far as they can justify themselves to the



world by use or beauty; all are, in some sort, expressions of the mind of Jesus. This is the dynamic conception of Christianity. It sees, in diversity itself, a unity more real than that which cannot live except by forcible elimination of all that is not uniform with itself. To the modernist, one reality need not necessarily be clothed with the same forms as other realities; all are real in proportion as they conform to divine laws of growth; and, to borrow the idea which Dante himself took from Boethius, all may say: "my desire and will are rolled, with the steady motion of a wheel, by that Love which moves the sun and the other stars"<sup>1</sup>.

Nor are such conceptions exclusively modern; among the greatest of the early Fathers there was a far stronger conception of religious evolution, and of unity in diversity, than we find in the Middle Ages proper. Gregory II, in 730 A.D., could complacently argue upon the supposition that the apostles had worshipped images<sup>2</sup>; conspicuous theologians often claimed an apostolic origin for monachism and for the system of indulgences; but men like Origen and Augustine knew too much of history and philosophy to go so far astray. If the ignorant multitude of their age, and the whole official Church of later and more ignorant ages, conceived their religion in the extreme static sense—if they imagined Christ and his apostles as having handed down a series of clear-cut and immutable dogmas, outside of which there would be no salvation—this was not the fault of the greatest minds in the early Christian generations.

The worst distortions of Christianity, perhaps, have sprung from the crude notions of heaven and hell suggested to the multitude by Christ's brief and highly-coloured allusions. Here and there a Christian thinker might argue, even in the Dark or Middle Ages, that God may recognize as Christians many who never bore that name<sup>3</sup>; but, to the vast majority, all time and all eternity were conditioned by the sharpest possible line of division, drawn at the moment of death. A minority would

<sup>1</sup> *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Migne, P.L. vol. 89, col. 514. The pope's personal authorship of this letter found among his works has been questioned; but nobody doubts that the letter was sent from the Roman Court to the Emperor Leo III; nor is there any trace of disapproval expressed by Gregory or any subsequent Popes.

<sup>3</sup> See the references in *Christ, St Francis and Today*, pp. 105, 190.

go to everlasting bliss, the great majority to unending torment; and this immeasurable contrast was as glaring in time as in quality; it was just the dying man's last breath which brought a decision as sudden as it was irrevocable; between one moment and another, he for whom everything had been possible was now sealed eternally to one fate or the other. The growth of the doctrine of an intermediate state softened this contrast, but left it essentially unchanged for thinking men; each might hope that he deserved no more than purgatory; but none could be sure that the devil might not seize him at his last gasp<sup>1</sup>; no pains could be wasted which guarded, even in the most infinitesimal degree, against this horrible contingency. The full consequences of such a faith are seen even today in Sicily, where murderers after their execution are worshipped as saints. The crowd is more certain of these men's salvation than of the holiest among the rest; such a man has publicly repented on the scaffold, has received the last cleansing rites of the Church, and goes straight into eternity without a moment for further sin<sup>2</sup>. No great writer in the Middle Ages drew this strictly logical inference; all the best men did all they could to avoid the more immoral consequences of the official creed; indeed, it may be said that the best men so emphasized the truly spiritual side of Christianity, and were so completely possessed by it, that crudities and superstitions fall into the background. Lord Acton insists that there are two Gods in the modern Roman Church, the good God of real Christianity, and the very different God of ultramontaniam; and certainly it was so in the Middle Ages<sup>3</sup>. S. R. Maitland vindicated the spirituality of the best medieval theologians against the hasty and ignorant accusations current in his day<sup>4</sup>; but a very great deal might be cited with equal truth on the opposite side; the God of the *Imitatio* is not the same who appears in the *Miracles de St-Benoît*, or even in St Gregory's *Dialogues* and Peter the Venerable's *Liber Miraculorum*.

This eschatology, crude as it was, did unquestionably contribute to the fact that the medieval man looked forward more

<sup>1</sup> Logically, that is: illogically, a man might choose to convince himself of his own future salvation; and this feeling (which Newman mistakenly imagined to have been born with Calvinism) was fairly common in the Middle Ages: see *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 13. <sup>3</sup> *Correspondence*, I, 78. <sup>4</sup> *The Dark Ages*, ch. vii.

seriously than his remote ancestors; and foresight is one of the main conditions of cultural advance. All serious books of the Middle Ages, it may almost be said, are coloured by the one main consideration that every man has a soul to save; certainly all their philosophy was based upon that assumption. There was, indeed, much more scepticism of all kinds than has generally been admitted; but the vast majority acquiesced, at least, in the official creed; and the attempt to put that creed into practice resulted inevitably in the experiment of monachism. The early stages of that experiment have been admirably described in two easily-accessible books, by the ablest French specialist of the Roman communion, and the most distinguished Protestant. It will be found, I hope, that the following brief description tallies both with Mgr Duchesne's *Histoire Ancienne de l'Eglise* (II, 491 ff. and III, 32 ff.), and with Harnack's *Das Mönchthum* (translated into English in a little volume which has for its main title *The Confessions of St Augustine*).

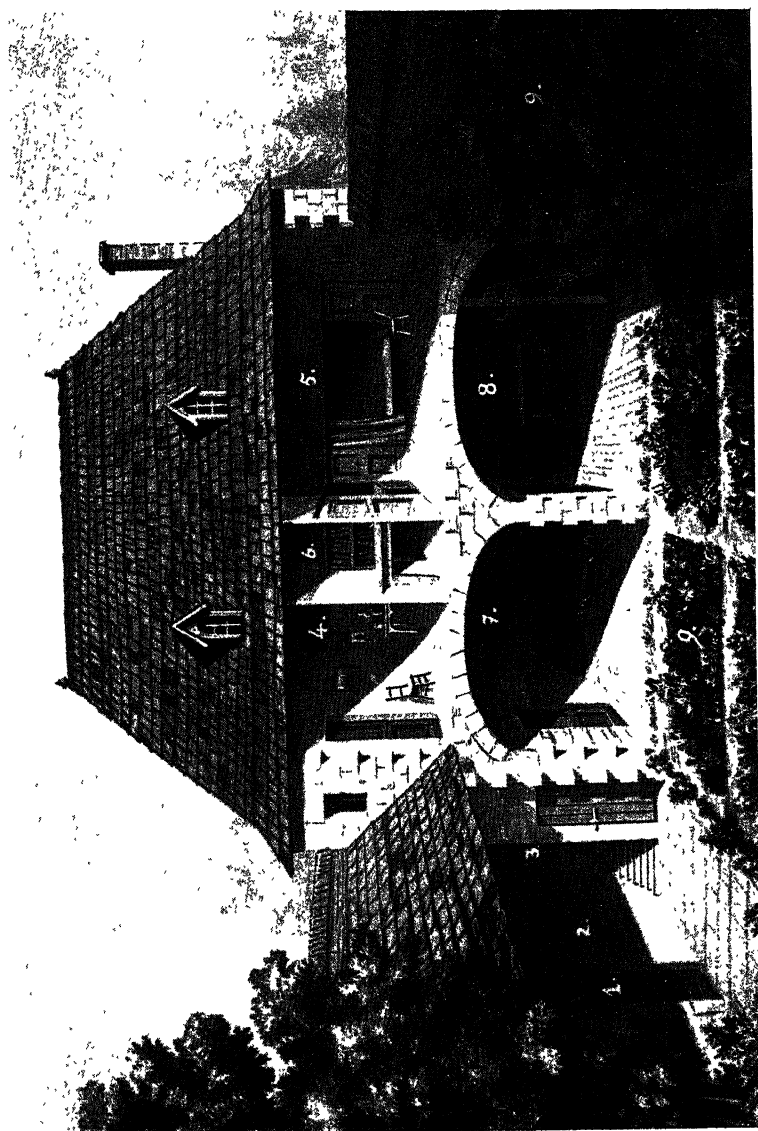
Monachism represents the extreme ideal of "otherworldliness" in the Church; and it represents that ideal in an organized form. The question of the earnest Christian's attitude towards the world around him was not always quite simple from the very first; it grew more complicated in process of time, as the world changed—and, above all, as the Church herself changed. Was Christ a socialist? We have repudiated the suggestion; yet, at least, we must admit that he wished his more immediate disciples to be unencumbered with earthly possessions and family ties. Moreover, only so could they have done their missionary work: and we must also remember how the early Christians lived in daily expectation of the second coming of their Lord. But, as years, and then generations passed, this exclusively missionary element naturally fell more and more into the background. Many Christians had their family, their business, their office under the State. Should they abandon these, or might not more be done for Christ by using them for Christian purposes? The problem was acute already in apostolic times; how was a wife to do when she found herself married to an unbeliever, or *vice versa*? St Paul's solution was in accordance not only with common sense and charity, but also with the higher courage (1 Cor. vii, 13-16): "Let her not leave him...

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" The general balance of choice would tend the more steadily in that direction in proportion as time wore on and the end of all things seemed more and more remote; it became evident then that even the Christian must do what he could to make the best of the existing world.

And, as this problem confronted the individual, so also it confronted the society, the Church. Should it remain as obscure, as detached as possible, waiting in solitude for the Second Advent? or should it enter into civic life and imperial life? should it form an *imperium in imperio*, and so pursue its missionary work by ordinary business methods? It would be difficult to find an answer different from that which was in fact given; yet that decision meant relegating some very plain gospel precepts to the position of counsels of perfection. Property, family ties, office in city or in state, all these things implied either a silent abandonment of certain tenets distinctive of the first generation of Christians, or a difficult and perpetual struggle of adaptation. We need go no farther than this to explain the growing worldliness of the Church. This did not begin with Constantine and his state-church; it was already notorious before 250 A.D. We there find the Church losing, on the one hand, her disciplinary hold; she no longer exacts more than the minimum penance for notorious offences; she is anxious to keep all she can, and fears to frighten any adherent away. And, in the midst of this growing charity towards sins against God, she becomes on the other hand less and less indulgent towards sins against herself. Strong in her outward organization, she boasts all the more of herself as the One, and insists the more inexorably on excluding all who disagree with her. We see this clearly in the revolt and secession of the Montanists—those puritans of the early Church with whom even Tertullian, one of the greatest of the early Fathers, threw in his lot. These Montanists rejected all compromise with the world; intent on the Second Advent, they had no sympathy with the idea of a Church converting infidel society by slow and patient interpenetration. But orthodoxy excommunicated and expelled the Montanists at the end of the second century: the Church split then on the question

of toleration of the world, as the Anglican Church is likely to split in our age on the question of toleration of free thought in Christianity. And from that time forth, if not before, we may say that Christian society was no longer bound together mainly by the bonds of fraternal love, but by the framework of an official hierarchy. Moreover, the hierarchy, in order to keep its power over the mass of the baptized, had to make constant concessions to ordinary social customs—in other words, the worldly spirit. Therefore, within a century of this time, we find an increasing stream of hermits going forth into the wilderness: "They fled from the world, and therefore from the Church which had admitted the world into her bosom," and they thus divided Christendom not controversially, but in self-defence. This impulse came partly from Alexandria, then the centre of Christian thought. Partly, also, it originated in imitation of the pagan ascetics who had long lived in the Egyptian desert. The earliest Christian hermits were Paul and Antony, whose lives are enveloped in obscurity: but of whom we know that they were roughly contemporaries, who chose an eremitical life between 250 and 300 A.D., and whose example attracted numerous disciples. About a century later, it is certain that the remoter Eastern districts swarmed with such anchorites. In that climate, the transition is easy from civilization to a sort of Nebuchadnezzardom. I had once the opportunity of asking Dr Doughty, after the republication of his *Wanderings in Arabia*, what had been his worst enemy on that adventurous travel. He replied without hesitation: "Hunger." "Then the Bedouin's diet of dates is unsatisfying?" "No, but the Bedouin gets so little even of dates; if it were not a climate in which one could scrape oneself a hole in the sand, and starve and dream all day long, it would be impossible to survive." This was an illuminating word for Egyptian monachism; and Michelet has written a few pages of autobiography which throw a similar cross-light on our subject<sup>1</sup>. In the period of bodily starvation which succeeded his break-down from overwork, he noted the characteristics of this fasting life; its vagueness, even where it had a singular clearness of its own, like the clearness of a half dream at dawn; its poetry, its wanderings among the clouds and stars, yet its incapacity to

<sup>1</sup> *Le Banquet*, chap. vi, Philosophie du Jeûne.



A CARTUSIAN MONK'S CELL



bring anything solid back with it to everyday life. "How could I ever have persuaded myself" (he adds, in words marked by Lord Acton) "that it was the fasts of the Church which created the Gothic Cathedrals!" And thus he applied his own experience of an invalid slowly reviving under the Italian sun to his past studies in medieval history. This life of seclusion and passive contemplation in the eastern deserts, as it attracted those who aimed at the strictest self-discipline, tempted also the undisciplined and the sluggard. A little manual labour sufficed to keep body and soul together; a little weaving of palm-baskets or husbandry in an oasis; and sometimes pilgrims came with offerings enough to render even the lightest labour unnecessary. Already at the beginning of the fifth century, Jerome describes idle and useless monks as a common phenomenon. They came in crowds to overawe the church councils; about 390 A.D., even the orthodox emperor Theodosius wrote to St Ambrose "*monachi multa scelera faciunt*"; and to this, more perhaps than to any other cause, we owe the irrevocability of monastic vows<sup>1</sup>. So long as the monk's status was purely voluntary, and therefore his obedience fluctuated between church and state, he formed an anomalous and unsettled element in the body politic. It suited the hierarchy, but it was still more important for the government, that his status should be clearly defined and his allegiance fixed beyond all ambiguity. Therefore, from 532 onwards, we find imperial legislation providing that the monk must choose, once for all, between his cloister and the world. For, in the meantime, the solitary cell had been to a great extent superseded by what we may already call the cloister. *Vae soli!* is the constant refrain of monastic disciplinarians; "Woe to him which is alone, for, when he falleth, he hath none to lift him up"<sup>2</sup>. The single cave or hut, then, gave place more and more to the organized group; Pachomius, about 315 A.D., had already organized community-life on a large scale, and written a Rule for it. The best Pachomian monasteries became not only praying colonies but working colonies, numbering hundreds of inmates<sup>3</sup>. St Basil, about 360, carried this organization a step further, and

<sup>1</sup> L. Duchesne, *Hist. Ancienne de l'Eglise*, II, 521; H. C. Lea, *Hist. of Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 3rd ed. I, 119 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. iv, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Brief but excellent descriptions of this stage of monachism may be found in Abbot Butler, ch. ii, and Workman, ch. ii, § 6.



his Rule has since dominated the East, though not so completely, no doubt, as Benedict's dominated the West<sup>1</sup>.

It is important to note how strongly early monasticism was tinged with unsacerdotalism (not, of course, with *anti*-sacerdotalism). We see this most strongly, of course, in the earliest, or anachoretic, stage of monastic history. It is difficult (as Duchesne points out) to avoid the conclusion that St Antony never received the Holy Communion for years and years together<sup>2</sup>. One year, at least, it needed a special miracle to tell St Benedict which was Easter day<sup>3</sup>. Yet it always comes out in the purest forms of monasticism; reforms like those of Cîteaux and St Francis are characterized by a definite subordination of the priestly element. We must beware, however, of supposing that these unsacerdotal movements ran into anti-sacerdotalism. Though monks and secular clergy differed so widely in their manner of life, yet they could agree to differ. The world-cleric, however unwilling to abandon society for his own part, was quite willing that others should do so; the Middle Ages laid immense emphasis on the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice; and everywhere we find the bargain, tacit or expressed, "You shall mortify your body; you shall amass a treasury of merits; you shall pray for me, and I will contribute to your sustenance." The monk, on the other hand, was glad to have the secular cleric as his ally against the common enemy of Christianity. If, therefore, it was inevitable that Christendom should separate in practice on the question of cloister-life and world-life, there was no reason in theory why both should not work together.

Monasticism, growing up thus spontaneously in the East, soon spread westwards, and became an even greater factor in Western than in Eastern civilization. For Harnack draws a contrast which, however he may exaggerate for the sake of epigrammatic brevity, is true in the main. The monk of the Greek Church has remained, to the present day, more remote from the world than the Western monk was at his best. Though the great Basilian monasteries were to some extent organized for external beneficence, yet the Eastern monks made few direct contribu-

<sup>1</sup> See W. K. Lowther Clarke, *St Basil the Great*, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> Duchesne, *Hist. Anc.* II, 491.

<sup>3</sup> Gregory, *Dialogues*, bk II, c. i.

tions to civilization; they were seldom leaders of thought; and, as state officials, their rôle was less of guidance than of passive obedience. It was among rougher people, and under a more inclement sky, that self-discipline became a more active force; and Western monachism centres round St Benedict.

There were already many monasteries in the West before him, and even monastic lawgivers. Celtic monachism was definitely earlier, and differed markedly, in many important respects, from Benedictinism<sup>1</sup>. About 360, we find in Italy, under St Eusebius of Vercelli, what is practically a monastery; and, at the same date, St Martin founded an actual monastery in France, at Ligugé. John Cassian, about 410, compiled his *Institutes* and *Collations*, collections of monastic precepts and examples which do in effect supply a Rule in the vaguer sense; Caesarius of Arles (about 530) compiled a Rule for his monks, and another for his nuns. Benedict's contemporary, Cassiodorus, founded a monastery and gave it a Rule in which reading and writing should, in a great measure, take the place of manual labour: this was some ten or twenty years after Benedict had written his own Rule. The time was evidently ripe; and in St Benedict there appeared the man.

<sup>1</sup> See J. W. Willis-Bund, *Celtic Church of Wales*, 1897; excellently summarized by Workman, pp. 181 ff.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MONK'S GOD

BEFORE following the actual events of St Benedict's life, and that Rule which became the real foundation of Western monachism, it may be well to consider what religious ideals were logically implied in, or practically developed by, this coenobitic institution. What went these men out into the wilderness to see?

The full answer would supply matter for a volume or volumes; I must compress it here into a few chapters, of which the insufficiency cannot be felt more acutely by my readers than by myself. It is often rash to generalize even on the religion of one's own country and generation; and, so far as all the finer shades are concerned, the difficulty increases with each backward step in time. Yet, on the other hand, we cannot fully realize ourselves without some comprehension of our forefathers; and to understand our medieval forefathers we must above all things study their religious outlook. Here, it is very easy to exaggerate in either direction. If I had chosen to represent the worst cases of ecclesiastical ignorance or perversity as typical, I could easily have filled these chapters with a *chronique scandaleuse*, true in detail but distorted as a whole. Yet even this, however invidious, would have been scarcely more misleading than the contrary exaggerations of Kenelm Digby, who picks out a series of exceptional manifestations, and holds these up as types of those Ages of Faith to which civilization must return, or perish. Moreover, such bright examples are easily accessible not only in Digby's works but often in translations from their own writings, or at least in admirable monographs. Rémusat's and Church's *Anselm*, Morison's and Vacandard's *St Bernard*, Marson's biography of St Hugh of Lincoln (mainly translated from the contemporary *Magna Vita*), and Michelet's chapter on Thomas à Kempis and the *Livre de l'Internelle Consolacion*, are all easily accessible. The *Imitation* itself is one of the cheapest volumes in the book-market; most of St Bernard has been translated, a good deal of St Anselm;

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the religious autobiography of the mystic Suso, and many of Tauler's sermons; the English mystics can easily be read. In these books the reader may, for himself, study monastic contemplation and prayer at their best; and if he still finds himself agreeing that Thomas à Kempis "would make the world the most wretched...place of sojourn"<sup>1</sup>, let him remember that such teaching is in strict accordance with postulates which nearly all thinking men accepted in those days; and, further, that the riddle of existence has not been solved even yet, and that many unprejudiced modern thinkers are willing to allow great force to the ascetic view of life.

Yet let us remember, on the other hand, that this noble combination of a firm grasp upon realities with a scorn of all that is merely transitory cannot be claimed as characteristically medieval; here, we may set beside the Catholic saints a great cloud of witnesses from without that narrower fold. The chosen spirits of all history are stamped with a strong family likeness; Plato might have shaken hands with Anselm; and Plato's real religion was no more typical of the Greek creed of his day than Anselm's was of the ordinary Catholic<sup>2</sup>. It is the line of least resistance in history, but a very dangerous line, to choose a

<sup>1</sup> Thackeray, writing of *The Imitation of Christ* (*A Collection of Letters of W.M.T.*, 1887, p. 96).

<sup>2</sup> Dr Inge, in his *Christian Mysticism*, has justly emphasized the essential resemblance between mystics of all religions, Eastern and Western. But an actual quotation may make this even clearer. I take it from the review of a recent book by a Hindu mystic, Rai Sahib Dinesh Chandra Sen (*Times Lit. Suppl.* Jan. 13, 1921). There is but one word in this noble protest—a single technical word—which might not have come from an orthodox mystic of the Middle Ages: "In a brief preface to his last book, Mr Sen challenges the incredulity of even his own co-religionists. 'If you say,' he asserts, 'that this attainment of His presence is but a fancy of the mind, since no one really attains it, I ask what is the attainment of Him. It is the taking of Him to the soul, in the belief that He is true. And if this be getting Him, can you say that we fail to get Him? If you say that this is all sheer folly, how is it that the fool gains the whole world? If you say that we are mad, when the madman walks the street the very dogs recognize him. And how is it that he whom you call mad is recognized by the great of the earth, by the sceptic, the worldling, the Vaidantic, the ascetic, who forget their dogmas and their preoccupations in admiration of simple faith? Why do they gaze at him with straining and streaming eyes? Is it not that they know that he has attained the Divine vision? He that has grasped the supreme beauty shows it in his eyes and in his face. Those who go empty hearted betray their vacuity even to their own consciences. Some say that the pearl is only a disease of the oyster. If our attainment, too, be but a disease of the soul, is not the pearl ours? Is not such a disease more desirable than health itself?'"

few brilliant examples as typical of any age<sup>1</sup>. Roger Bacon, knowing only a little of a few great Greeks and Romans, was hypnotized by the vast superiority of these men, and jumped to the conclusion that general society in classical times had lived by a far higher moral standard than his own thirteenth century<sup>2</sup>. Newman and the Tractarians were similarly hypnotized by a few great men of the Middle Ages; their disinterested one-sidedness gave them great penetrating force; they brought new life into the Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism of their generation; but there is no reason why we should go on merely transcribing Newman as Newman transcribed Mabillon. If the public is to learn the truth, we must even consciously redress this want of balance by counter-emphasis; the last few generations have bequeathed to the social historian of the Middle Ages something of a negative task. It has been my aim therefore, in these chapters, to concentrate the main light upon what may be called the middle and upper-middle classes in medieval religion—upon that vast mass intermediate between the saint and the sinner, in whom the really distinctive type of a society or of an age is to be found. It will be noted that all the writers from whom I shall quote were recognized as teachers in their own day; while some (like Caesarius of Heisterbach) enjoyed great authority even into the seventeenth century or beyond. And I may add that I have taken real pains to choose the typical even among these writers, and even in fields where, in the nature of the case, material vouchers are impossible, since the compiler must trust to his own instinct in selection<sup>3</sup>. More and more I am encouraged to hope that this selection will bear the test of time, in proportion as year

<sup>1</sup> The late Father Figgis, whose admiration for the Middle Ages was tempered by a great deal of first-hand knowledge and a saving sense of humour, was willing to admit the one-sidedness of many current representations. "The modern world tolerates sanctity rather than admires it, and outside the Bible regards it as almost wicked to believe in saints. Further, it has a notion of what the saints are that is almost entirely false to the facts; and before they can be made an apologetic argument their character, their variety, their enormous practical influence, and their abilities need to be better known." (*Civilisation at the Cross-Roads*, 1913, p. 211.)

<sup>2</sup> See *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. v.

<sup>3</sup> In this and the next chapter, for instance, I am seldom directly indebted for my quotations to Roskoff or Baissac; Richalm I had met quite independently. And if I venture, out of innumerable possible quotations from medieval records, to present a few here as typical, it is because I have read

after year of study has convinced me that the most prominent champions of ultramontaniam in medieval history are men who quote mainly at second or third hand from medieval books which I have taken pains to read in the original, and from which my opinions have been formed, as a rule, in complete independence of modern non-Catholic writers. If I have in fact spoken with unusual plainness about Roman- and Anglo-Catholic histories, and may have to speak equally plainly again, it is because I have spent many hours in testing them by the original sources from which they claim implicitly or explicitly to derive, and because I am convinced that we can make no real progress until it becomes usual to test all facile generalizations in the same manner.

The monk's religion, at its best, was coloured with that impatient patience of the saints' cry in the Apocalypse—*Quousque Domine?* "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge?" "The Lord is at hand"; this long accumulation of human offences calls for a proportionately sudden and dramatic judgement of God; "the righteous also shall see, and fear, and laugh at him that made not God his strength." As with the single soul, so with the world; the final seal shall be set in the twinkling of an eye; and one turn of God's balance shall decide between eternal bliss and eternal misery. Therefore "we preach, as never sure to preach again, and as a dying man to dying men." "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation"; nothing else is worth serious thought.

But the falsehood of this last corollary went far to cancel the truth of the main proposition. By all means let us remember that every moment matters; but let us not believe that this is the whole of God's truth, and that all else may be neglected. The whole education of the human race lies in our gradually recognizing, first, the complexities which underlie simple words like *man* and *God*, and, consequently, the danger of attempting to reduce our creed to clear-cut, simple and immutable formulas. There is at least this good in modern religion, that it rests no longer on the assumption of a catastrophic judgement impending at any moment, but rather tries to see man's life as a whole, sufficiently at random among monastic biographers and moralists to feel some confidence of generalization. A writer concerned to expose only the most sordid sides of religious life in the Middle Ages could fill a volume with scandalous matter which will not be found in this book.

and to think of the universe in terms of historical, or even geological time. Many critics of present-day religion (if we are to take their words seriously) would seem to fear that there must be something wrong with a God who has evolved the present world by such slow degrees; something wrong with modern man for striving honestly to measure the sluggish vastness of the past, and for confronting the possibilities of a no less vasty future. To face these things passes sometimes for sinful pride; yet it was an orthodox medieval abbot who wrote *ignorantia plures habet superbos quam humiles*; and it was perhaps the greatest of Catholic historians who quoted those words in self-defence against the pious ignorance of his own day<sup>1</sup>. But, however inexcusable this impatience of research may be in those who aspire to lead the thought of their generation, it is natural and inevitable in the multitude. The thinking man always stands, as the Apostles did, between the moment when a materialistic conception of the Kingdom of Heaven was exploded, and the moment when the New Jerusalem is ready to come down adorned as a bride from heaven; he may always cry, with de Musset, "ce qui a été n'est plus; ce qui sera n'est pas encore; voilà le secret de nos maux!" For this impatience is not confined to orthodoxy; the sceptic will often catch at illusion as a relief from an aching void of disillusion. "O, reprends ce néant," wrote Victor Hugo in a moment of weariness:

O, reprends ce néant,  
Gouffre, et rends-nous Satan!

And Heine can even regret the "comfortable" days when man still believed in the devil.

Das Herz ist mir bedrückt, und sehnlich  
Gedenke ich der alten Zeit;  
Die Welt war damals noch so wöhnlich,  
Und ruhig lebten hin die Leut'.

Doch jetzt ist alles wie verschoben,  
Das ist ein Drängen! eine Not!  
Gestorben ist der Herrgott oben,  
Und unten ist der Teufel tot.

Und alles schaut so grämlich trübe,  
So krausverwirrt und morsch und kalt.....

<sup>1</sup> J. Mabillon, *Traité des Études Monastiques*, pt i, ch 13.

But the poetic licence of these disillusioned men of letters will not bear comparison with the plain homespun prose of a man who lived himself in those "comfortable" times; one who himself believed most sincerely in the devil, and struggled all his life against the half-believers. Berthold of Regensburg, one of the greatest of medieval preachers, pauses in one of his sermons to meet an objecting voice from the audience:

Brother Berthold, thou speakest oft and oft of these devils and all their sleights, yet we never hear or see or touch or feel a single devil.

To which Berthold replies:

Lo! now that is even the worst harm they can do thee: for, hadst thou but once seen a single devil in his true form, I should know for certain that thou wouldst never sin more... If the devil came out at this moment from this forest hard by, and this city that we see before us were a burning fiery furnace heated through and through, then should ye see such a press of folk as never was seen, and such as shall never be seen in this world, and all of them thronging head-long into that burning fiery furnace<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, while some disbelieved as rationalists, others withheld belief simply out of passive stupidity: that which Hugo or Heine felt at moments, the multitude feels always; it shrinks from walking by faith rather than by sight; the unseen must be so like to the seen, and so easily visualized, as to involve no great effort of religious imagination. The true Christian always risks to be mistaken, as in the earliest days of his religion, for an atheist, since his God is not the God of the multitude. Medieval religion, like all others, tells a story of continual revolt and counter-revolt; of the many struggling against the few, and the few against the many. St Augustine's *Confessions*, St Bernard's letters, the *Imitatio*, are splendid monuments of noble faith. But even they show also, what we know from many other sources, how brief is the step from the sublime to the ridiculous; and average natures, meaner natures, materializing what they could grasp of these higher abstractions, were too often found wallowing frankly in the ridiculous. The reflection of these religious ideas in the common mind was the merest caricature

<sup>1</sup> *Predigten*, ed. Pfeiffer, I, 413. The same thought occurs frequently in Herolt, *Ex.* P. 66 and 67, *Serm.* cxxv, R; cf. Vinc. Beauvais, *Spec. Nat.* I. II, c. 121.



of its reflection in Augustine's. Nor need we descend to the lowest classes to find this painful contrast. The official creed of the Middle Ages, quite apart from popular corruptions—the religion prescribed by Papal and Conciliar decrees, and systematized in such authoritative books as Aquinas's *Summa*—differed widely from the religion for which the earliest martyrs died, and from any religion which the modern world is likely to accept in its entirety. Modern Catholicism, when certain postulates are granted, stands on very strong ground. But when the reasonable modern Catholic claims identity between his own creed and that of the thirteenth century, he has been misled by the historians of his own communion into saying the thing that is not.

There is only a one-sided truth in Renan's often-quoted epigram, *The monk is the true Christian*. It would be more strictly true, though less brief and pointed, to say that the monk is the Institutional Christian writ large. Much that is characteristic of monachism in general can hardly be found in the Christ of the Gospels. The monk's spirit is less that of *he that is not against us is for us*, than of *we forbade him, because he followeth not after us*. Christ discouraged length, formality and publicity in prayers; yet these became essential to Western monachism; public prayer, according to set forms, was the *Opus Dei* par excellence, and was arranged to fill half the monk's waking hours<sup>1</sup>. The first Christians were wandering, homeless and disendowed; the monk was far more securely housed and endowed than the average citizen of his day. He clung to his distinctive costume with a superstitious reverence for which it is impossible to find any justification in the Gospels. The monk's life was dedicated to the same Lord as St Paul's, but

<sup>1</sup> Abbot Butler calculates these daily services at only four hours in St Benedict's own time; but they were lengthened afterwards. Concerning the choir service in general he writes (p. 29): "Of the external services St Benedict placed prayer, and in particular common prayer, the celebration in choir of the canonical office, first in order of thought and importance. . . It so filled his mind that it is the one subject on which he legislates in minute detail, devoting eleven chapters to that ordering of the psalmody and office which after fourteen centuries is still used by his sons: 'the Work of God' is his name for it, and he says that 'nothing is to be set before the Work of God.'" Compare the words of Adam, the twelfth-century Praemonstratensian of St Andrew's: "Psalmodia in choro . . . specialiter opus Dei est." (B. Pez, *Thesaurus*, i, ii, col. 352.)

it was only a very small fraction of cloisterers who earned their livelihood by the labour of their hands, or who made themselves all things to all men. The vast majority never attempted to move as freely among their fellow-men and women as Christ and His disciples had moved. And features which were still subordinate even in the institutional Christianity of subapostolic times obtained an exaggerated importance in the fullest development of monachism. The Mass, formalized throughout the Church as time went on, was formalized tenfold in conventual churches. Image-worship, ridiculed by Origen and other early Fathers, gradually acquired a firm hold in the sanctuary, and most of all in the monastic sanctuary. Although the monk, in early days, was expressly contrasted with the cleric, and though the distinction survived as a matter of technical terminology to the end of the Middle Ages, yet the average monk tended to become more clerical in his ideas than all the rest of the clergy. And those ideas of God which most clearly differentiate medieval from modern Christianity flourished with peculiar luxuriance in the cloister.

It was at first the strength of the Christian religion, as it afterwards became its weakness, to lay intense stress upon the great issues at stake in every human life. The moral earnestness of Stoicism could not commend itself to the multitude; the cults of Mithra and Cybele, did indeed so commend themselves; but these possessed comparatively little moral content. Christianity alone succeeded, even more than Judaism, in bringing home to multitudes of average men and women the eternal importance of truth and of right conduct. It made men believe in a future life who had never believed before; and its adherents were marked by that "inflexible and intolerant zeal" which Gibbon notes as one factor in its success. From at least a very early time, the Gospels were so interpreted as to fix a literally immeasurable gulf between religious success and religious failure. Here and there a writer of doubtful orthodoxy might agree with Origen in hoping that God might set some limit to damnation, however distant. But the overwhelming majority agreed with Augustine, and Origen's influence was almost negligible in the Middle Ages. To Augustine, it was "very absurd" that Christians, from sentimentality, should hope for any end to

the agonies of the damned, so long as they believed in the eternal happiness of the blessed<sup>1</sup>. He meets the objections of those who refused to believe that the body could suffer such torments without being consumed<sup>2</sup>; these objections he can disprove by three concrete examples, the salamander lives in fire; the hardest diamonds may be cut with the help of goat's blood; and the flesh of the peacock is incorruptible, a thing anteriorly incredible, but tested by Augustine's personal observation<sup>3</sup>. He next goes on to refute those who feel that no crime can deserve punishment to all eternity. By Adam's sin we are all damned in the lump—*hinc est universa generis humani massa damnata*—and, "even as, if all remained under the pains of this just condemnation, there would be no room for the merciful grace of our Redeemer, so also, if all were transported from darkness into light, the severity of the Avenger would nowhere appear." He makes short work of those who plead that, since Christians are bound to pray even for their worst enemies, therefore the saints must pray for these their wretched fellow-creatures, and God must lend an ear to such piteous supplications. The saints do not pray for the damned, since these are not the saints' enemies but the enemies of God; nor can we believe that Christ, when he spoke of "*eternal* fire," was threatening what he did not mean—*minaciter potius quam veraciter dictum*. And others before or after Augustine maintained this doctrine in even cruder forms. Tertullian, at the end of his *De Spectaculis*, strikes a note which rings all through the Middle Ages, that the saints shall actually gain added bliss through the sight of the torments of the damned<sup>4</sup>. Christianity had had to fight for existence, and it was scarred to the last by this conflict. The faithful could not forget what some of their noblest had suffered; and, thus remembering, could not altogether forgive<sup>5</sup>.

It is impossible to separate early Christianity altogether from

<sup>1</sup> *De Civ. Dei*, lib. XXI, c. 23, *ad fin.*; cf. all chapters 1–26, Gregory the Great repeats the same argument.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the popular doubts in the thirteenth century as shown in Berthold of Regensburg's sermons. I deal briefly with these in the second of my *Medieval Studies* (2nd ed. 1915).

<sup>3</sup> c. 4.  
<sup>4</sup> Gibbon and Lecky have made this passage well-known; but it is so significant that I reprint it here (appendix 2 A).

<sup>5</sup> It was, in fact, this natural cult of the martyrs which did most to bring image-worship into the Church.

the world in which it was born and grew up. It had conquered partly in virtue of its inherent strength, partly by adaptation to its environment; and in that environment popular demonology played a very important part. It was natural, therefore, that the demon's rôle should become increasingly prominent in the new religion. Not that the age of real miracles had ceased. Ambrose's victory over Theodosius, and Leo's influence over Attila, were triumphs of spiritual and moral force; and, so long as the Church had men of this kind, she stood like Moses over against Pharaoh's magicians<sup>1</sup>. But Christianity as a state-religion adopted many ordinary methods of statecraft; it then became, too often, a struggle of magician against magician; in mere self-defence, the orthodox must not only compete with but actually outbid the demonology of the heathen<sup>2</sup>. From the same causes, and during the same generations, the Church began to worship the images which she had formerly repudiated, and to promote the devils from their comparatively modest place in the New Testament to a far more conspicuous share in the growing creed<sup>3</sup>. They became materialized in direct ratio to the general materialization of Christianity; they took shape and colour. It is in the fourth century that we first learn how the

<sup>1</sup> But, at all times in the Middle Ages, there were clear-sighted and orthodox men who, starting from the fact that authentic miracles were rarer in their own day than they seemed to have been in the early days of Christianity, recognized the comparative weakness of the miracle for apologetic purposes. Among the earliest of these are Origen, Augustine and Gregory; one of the latest is the author of *Dives and Pauper*, who was probably a friar writing a little before 1400. The author says that, if God had not shown many miracles in apostolic times, "they that were in the faith should have forsaken the faith, and few would have come to the faith... [But, nowadays], if any such miracles fall in any land among Christian people, it is a token that some of them be not stable in the faith, and that God is not all apayed [*i.e.* pleased] with the people. For St Paul saith that tokens and miracles be not given to people of right belief but to folk of false belief. And the more miracles that men see, the less need they have for their faith, as St Gregory saith in his homily. And so multitude of martyrs and miracles prove not goodness of the people that they be done among, but rather they show and prove the malice of the people." (*Prec.* 1, c. 56; cf. my *Christ, St Francis and Today*, 1919, pp. 26 ff.)

<sup>2</sup> St Augustine tells us how, now that Christians have become so numerous, the heathen find their best excuse in the evil lives of those who profess to follow Christ; and St Augustine's demonology is far more developed than that of the struggling days of Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the first volume of G. Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, and Lecky, *Rationalism in Europe*, chapters iii and iv.



Sketches on Church Walls and Pillars.

Fiend from Beechamwell (Norf.); Monk from Dunmow Priory (Essex);  
*Vernicles* or Christ-portraits from Kingston (Cambs), Gamlingay (Cambs)  
 and Coton (Cambs).

devil is black<sup>1</sup>; in the later Middle Ages, when men had formed clear (if contradictory) ideas of the form of the human soul and the supra-human angels<sup>2</sup>, they give us frequently the minutest descriptions of fiends that have been seen. Moreover, while the medieval artist could compass real beauty of feature only at exceptional times and places, the devil's portrait was within the scope of the rudest ages, or the least instructed village workman<sup>3</sup>.

In so far as the church walls were the Bible of the Poor, they formed necessarily a very rough-and-ready book; we may almost say, a nursery-book. It was the artist's business to preach; and, like the modern revivalist, he was naturally tempted to harsh outlines and lurid tints. St Methodius, we are told, converted King Bogoris of Bulgaria by painting on his palace walls an embodiment of the current conceptions of hell; that same Bogoris, in later life, followed his master's example and took the cowl<sup>4</sup>. To all but saints, indeed (and how many real saints are there in every generation?) these shadows are almost indispensable to bring out the brighter colours of religion; the medieval devil, as Roskoff puts it, was the natural shadow of the medieval angel<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, according to one of the most popular and accredited of chroniclers, God Himself needed the devil for artistic effect. Godfrey of Viterbo wrote:

But perchance thou wilt ask, O Reader, wherefore God created the Devil, knowing that he would turn to ill. I answer, that He created him for the garnishing of His own handiwork. Even as a painter layeth on his black background, that the white may come out more clearly,

<sup>1</sup> Roskoff, I, 284: but there is at least one earlier example than he quotes—the devil who appeared to St Antony in the form of a negro (*Vitaspatrum*, Migne, P.L. vol. 73, col. 130; cf. similar instances, cols. 879, 1131, 1155, and vol. 74, col. 200).

<sup>2</sup> Two separate visionaries quoted by Caesarius of Heisterbach saw the soul as a transparent glass-like globe, having eyes all round (I, 39, 208); the usual pictorial representation was in the form of a naked child. Guibert of Nogent is exceptional in dwelling on the incorporeal nature of the soul (cols. 676–7).

<sup>3</sup> I deal more fully with this subject in Chapter IV.

<sup>4</sup> AA.SS.Boll. Mart. II (1668), p. 13; Zedler, s.v. *Bogoris*.

<sup>5</sup> Compare the story of the artist painting the Virgin Mary and the devil which finds a place in many collections of Legends of the Madonna, and was recorded in the fifteenth century paintings on the walls of Eton College Chapel (M. R. James). In one of the Mary-legends, the artist spits at intervals in the face of the devil whom he is painting on the wall. A series of illustrations given in *Archaeologia* (vol. XLIX, opposite p. 206) exemplifies how much easier it was for the medieval artist to bring home to his readers the ugliness of the wicked than the beauty of the good.

so do the righteous become more radiant through the iniquity of the wicked<sup>1</sup>.

And this is the devil's rôle in monastic life. The colours of heaven were brighter, but vaguer; men dreamed of its unclouded blue and of its meadows "white and green and red"; but they were in no haste to quit cloister or choir, dormitory or refectory for that eternal home. Meanwhile, the dark background and the firm black outlines of monastic demonology



The Last Judgement. Good Religious. (Herrad v. Landsberg.)

gave far greater distinctness to the general religious picture, and determined men's conduct more directly at critical moments. For once that a saint is recorded to have trodden an urgent temptation underfoot by thinking of the joys of heaven, we could probably find a dozen cases where it is told of him, as of St Antony, that he found his shield in "the memory of the

<sup>1</sup> Godfrey of Viterbo, *Pantheon*, par. i, § 18 (ed. Struve, 1726, p. 21). Compare Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*, lib. xxxi, cc. 126, 129. (ed. Douai, 1624, pp. 1331, 1332), and Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dial. Mirac.* i, 330. Vincent (col. 1330) uses the simile of the painter and his picture, and sums up "infernî horror pertinet ad ornatum universi."

avenging pains of hell, and of the worm that dieth not"<sup>1</sup>. Quite characteristic for "conversion" (which, in nine out of ten medieval cases, means entrance into a monastery), is the tale of the Lord of Vignory told by Jacques de Vitry (p. 53) and Etienne de Bourbon (p. 58). His son, on his way to be knighted, rode through Clairvaux, where, "seeing these knights of the Blessed Virgin," he suddenly thought of his own mortality and entered the Order forthwith. The lord came with an armed host



The Last Judgement. Bad Religious (*Ibid.*)

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 73, col. 129. In Caesarius of Heisterbach's first section, *De Conversione*, the part played by the fear of hell is far more conspicuous than the brighter hopes; there is scarcely any trace of the modern altruistic idea that the primary impulse of conversion is the glory of God, apart from any question of personal salvation or damnation. In *The Alphabet of Tales*, a later collection of examples for sermons (E.E.T.S. 1904, pp. 147-9), the negative element is still more predominant. Caesarius explicitly notes the significance of the fact that "in almost all visions that have been vouchsafed of the pains of the wicked and glories of the elect, the vision of torment hath almost always come first" (I, 330). Ailred of Rievaulx, again, in his detailed description of the three steps of conversion to monasticism, puts fear first in point of time (col. 556; cf. 531-2). This had been formulated long before him by St Isidore of Seville, "let every convert first begin with fear for his sins, and thus let him pass to the desire of heavenly things... it is necessary



to burn out the monks who had stolen his son; the boy rode out to meet him:

and when the father saw his son disfigured with shorn hair and sordid vestures, he scarce knew him. Then, almost falling to the earth in his extremity of grief, he cried, "Son, wherefore hast thou thus dealt with me? Thou must come home again, and I submit all my lands to thy will." Then said the son: "Father, there is a certain most perilous custom in these lands of ours, which hath driven me forth from thy domain and constrained me to take the cowl." "Nay," said the father, "but I leave all the customs of my domain unto thy will, that thou mayest change or revoke them as it shall please thee; tell me now what is this custom which hath driven thee forth, and I promise thee surely that I will abolish it." Then said the son: "This is that custom which I fear so sore; that the young die as soon as the old—nay, and sometimes sooner—wherefore, unless thou abolish this custom, I will never return; for how canst thou promise me thy succession or thine inheritance when I know not that I shall outlive thee? For the calf dieth as quickly as the cow, the son as the father, the boy as the greybeard." Then said the father: "My son, how can I abolish this custom which God hath brought in?" And he was pricked to the heart and took the cowl side by side with his son.

This, almost everywhere, is the main point emphasized; as Ailred of Rievaulx says, whatever wealth or honours or pleasures a man may have forsaken in the world, he can set against them "this one privilege of Christ's servants, that they fear not death" (col. 532).

There is much anthropomorphism in all religions and in all ages: a man cannot jump away from his own shadow. But in this the Middle Ages stood midway between pagan materialism and the creeds of the present day; the immense success of the Saints was in a great measure due to the very human weaknesses mingled with their less approachable virtues. Giraldus Cambrensis observed that strangers who went to live in Ireland became *Hibernis ipsis Hiberniores*, and he marks something similar in the very Saints of that land:

This also seems notable; that, even as the men of this nation are that he should first turn to God in fear, that through dread of future torments his fleshly temptations may be conquered." (P.L. vol. 83, col. 609.) The actual medieval attitude is so often mistaken by modern writers who quote from each other instead of studying original sources, that it seems worth while to add an appendix on this subject (no. 3).

impatient and precipitate to vengeance, in this mortal life, beyond all other nations, so also those of them who are now raised above the rest by their merits displayed during their mortal life, seem more vindictive of mind than the Saints of other regions<sup>1</sup>.

So also with the medieval conceptions of Heaven, Earth, and Hell; all were imagined as subject to the same fundamental laws, organized alike, and presenting many analogies with each other. To repeat Roskoff's observation: the diabolic element appeared as a natural and necessary shadow of the spiritual.

This comes out very strongly in one of the most curious of all medieval demonologies. Some readers may have visited Schöenthal in the Neckar Valley, between Heilbronn and Heidelberg, as tourists; others may remember it as the place where Götz v. Berlichingen lies buried among his ancestors. It was founded for the Cistercians in 1157 by a noble of the place, who himself took the vows as a lay-brother. In 1218 and 1219 its abbot was Richalm, who had already attained to a considerable local fame as a visionary, and who after his death, earned the title of *Beatus*. Many of his discourses were carefully recorded by a disciple; and the book may perhaps be taken as the completest handbook of medieval demonology. A brief analysis of this book will enable us to proceed afterwards with a clearer view of our general bearings. The whole treatise, which is not long, was printed by Bernard Pez in his *Thesaurus*, 1721, vol. 1, pt ii, pp. 376 ff.

Richalm emphasizes, what had been insisted upon already by the Fathers of the Desert, that demons turn their main efforts against godfearing folk<sup>2</sup>. The majority of mankind are already the devil's<sup>3</sup>; his real quarrel is with the Elect; and these he attacks at what should be their holiest times and places:

A certain brother was vexed by devils, and cried to God for succour.

<sup>1</sup> R.S. v, 137.

<sup>2</sup> See *Vitaspatrum* (P.L. 74), col. 847; Cassian, *Coll.* vii, c. 27; Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Nat.* l. ii, c. 124; Kempis, *Disc. Claustr.* c. ii, § 1.

<sup>3</sup> This, of course, was a medieval commonplace. Augustine took very literally the text that many should be called and few chosen; *damnatorum multitudinem, salvandorum paucitatem*, writes the author of a treatise on the Scorn of this World which was often ascribed to Bonaventura; Caesarius of Heisterbach knows that the damned are "incomparably more numerous than the good" (I, 29). A few popular mystics, in the later Middle Ages, shrank from the implications of this horrible belief; but they found little encouragement here from official orthodoxy. See appendix 2 c.

Then answered the devils: "Do thou cease from thy works, and we will cease from ours. Thou art ever busy, and so are we. Fornicate, and do as other men, and we will no longer molest thee"<sup>1</sup>.

Specially fearing the Mass, they lay special wait for the celebrant:

At Prime, when the hour of Mass draws near, they come to trouble the celebrant, and to provoke him to some fit of wrath or indignation... When I was in the warming-house, I heard some devils saying to others: "Weaklings and sluggards! wherefore flock ye hither and spend ye your time in idleness? Wherefore are ye not at Mass?"... Hence it is that a certain brother hath complained to me that about the hour of Prime, and when he is robing himself for Mass, he is always possessed with troubling thoughts; whence and wherefore, he knoweth not.

This, suggests the pupil, may explain why Richalm himself takes the Blessed Sacrament with so loud and notable a smacking of the lips; but Richalm repudiates the fact itself; it is the devil who makes this sound, in order that one monk may attribute it to another.

"Is it the same, then, with that friend of ours whom I should warn against that indecorous custom of his if he were under my authority as he is under yours? For, when he eateth his pottage, he is wont to suck it from his spoon with a louder noise than I ever heard before, so that all we can hear who sit around him—nay and you yourself, at your other table, might hear him if you lent an ear. Moreover, in taking the Sacrament he sucks louder and more notably than need requires." "That too," replies Richalm, "is the same diabolical illusion, which does as much injustice to that brother as to myself. You have evidently no conception either of the demons' multitude, ubiquity, or activity. All our little daily slips and misunderstandings are either their acts or their figments—that groan that you just uttered was really theirs. On the other hand, you saw me put my hand convulsively to my beard; that was their doing. At other times, they make my hands so heavy that I can scarce raise them. They beset me at hours of labour and make me scant of breath; it is they who sometimes raise my spirits so high that I

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* col. 447 (where *incendis* should pretty certainly be *intendis*); the other references are to cols. 445, 377-9, 397, 417, 380, 408, 425, 433, 424, 385, 414, 380, 353, 454, 384, 388, 400, 380. For the special diligence of devils in haunting the best monks, see Guibert, col. 868, and Héloïse's confession in her second letter to Abailard; it is a commonplace with monastic moralists. "Religiosos tentant daemones de libidine plus quam alios." (Meffret, *Temp.* 24, b.)

break into actual laughter<sup>1</sup>. All this snoring and coughing and sneezing and spitting in choir is their work<sup>2</sup>. Here, indeed, they sometimes overreach themselves. One brother, at Matins in choir, heard one demon saying to the rest: 'Which of you made that fellow spit? would it not have been better to let him remain sleepy, than thus to wake him up to his psalm-singing?'"

But commonly they had considerable success.

The demons do indeed beset all: but they spend all their best strength and will upon Masters and Superiors, exhorting each other and saying: "If we do but ply these men and press upon them, then we shall conquer all; for if the head be sick all the members will suffer." Wherefore they compel me to nod and sleep in choir, that the rest may sleep there more freely and excusably. One troop of demons will spend all their force and all their efforts on weighing my eyes down and closing my eyelids. Another troop is deputed to cause a certain gloom and similitude of sleep—for it is no true sleep, but only an image of slumber. Another cometh and snoreth before my nose; and the brother by my side believeth that it is I who have slept and snored.

At this point the disciple answers:

"This occasion bringeth a matter into my mind which I must needs impart unto you, if perchance you can amend it. Oftentimes, in choir, you are wont to give forth a sound which is as the sound of them that sleep, or that groan, or that sigh for weariness and great oppression of travail." "True indeed; but it is the devils who do this. Do you remember those groans which I was wont to make openly in choir, and concerning which you rebuked me?" "I remember well." "Those also were made by them."

But the victory is not always to the demon:

"One night in choir, I heard one devil saying to another, 'Take those eyes for thy province to-night'; now it was of me that he spake, for that night I was wakeful and sober."..."Whenever I see a brother sleeping in choir, and purpose within myself to awaken him, then the demons exhort each other to prevent me, by awaking him before my coming to rouse him. And this they do lest perchance, when I shall have roused him and rebuked him, he should resist them some other night when they would fain overwhelm him with sleep."

For the demons bear defeat ill, lacking both generosity of mind

<sup>1</sup> Which, as we shall see, was as unbecoming to a medieval Religious as the dance and the theatre were to an Anglican of the Clapham school.

<sup>2</sup> "Sicut scitis, ego frequenter in choro soleo excreare" (380).

and courtesy of tongue; when baffled, they will descend to the coarsest terms of abuse.

Even now I heard the devils reviling us, and saying: "A pair of abominable whoresons!" Nay, to you in especial they say: "And thou too, filthy bald rat!"<sup>1</sup>

Next to Mass and psalmody, they fight hardest against labour, reading and writing. They make Richalm scant of breath whenever he tries to labour; it was they who, when he had caused stones to be collected for one building, instigated the prior to abstract these for some other purpose:

"Whereat I felt a wondrous sore pricking of inward indignation, but restrained myself and baffled the fiends<sup>2</sup>. They loathe especially to see us reading our Rule, or St Gregory or St Bernard: the other day I saw a devil carefully plastering up a lay-brother's ears, lest he should listen to the exposition of the Rule. When one of us sits at his reading they come up to him and, like one who cauterizes the skin, first touch him more distantly and breed weariness in him; and then more closely; and at last they come to close quarters and plunge the iron into him, so that the man is overcome with weariness, casts away his book, rises from his seat and departs... Oftentimes, when I am reading straight from the book and in thought only<sup>3</sup>, as I am wont, they make me read aloud word by word, that they may deprive me so much the more of the inward understanding thereof, and that I may the less penetrate into the interior force of the reading, the more I pour myself out in exterior speech." "What then," says the pupil, "do you advise? For we are seldom together in reading: each goeth to his own work." To which Richalm answers: 'Reading is a furnace; a furnace which trieth all men. When I sit at spiritual reading, they send sleep upon me; against which I am wont to put out my naked hands, that thus they may be chilled, and that the cold may prick and keep me more wakeful. Then the devils prick me under my garments like fleas; then they bite me and lay hold of my hands and draw them under my cowl, that they may grow warm and I may grow the more slothful in reading. Again, at other times, they rest my jawbone upon my hand, and spread

<sup>1</sup> "Et ipse jam daemones audivi exprobrantes et dicentes nobis: *Vos ambo pessimi filii meretricum!* Et ad vos specialiter dicunt: *Et tu, immunde calve mus!*" The demons applied the less courteous of these two epithets to the Precentor also, when he struck up the antiphon *Propitius esto* at Matins. "Numquam tibi fiat propitiatio apud Deum, pessime fili meretricis!" (448).

<sup>2</sup> 408, 425, 417; cf. 442, 398, 389-92, 395, 397.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. reading silently to himself. In St Augustine's time such silent reading was certainly very exceptional; and probably, all through the Middle Ages, most men read aloud even when they were alone.

my hand thereunder, that I may be the more inclined to sleep... It is their special and greatest business and care to occupy men with outward things, lest they should grasp the pure inward truth by reading; wherefore the devils strive to turn men rather to thoughts of lechery and to remove them from the sense of holy reading... Therefore it is that, even in the greatest convents, scarce one or two monks can be found who gladly sit in the cloister and gladly fix their attention on inward things."

So also with writing:

"Last night we were treating in the Parlour concerning the copying of St Bernard's sermons; and then I heard the devils saying 'what shall we do with this matter?' but I cared not therefore, until we had brought our purpose to good effect. For you must know that those complaints which were afterwards raised in Chapter by such and such a brother against the work of writing, saying that there were few who set themselves to this work of the Scriptorium—you must know, I say, that it was the devils who raised those complaints, and they are sore grieved that we should write. Afterwards I was tempted, and the brethren urged me to speak of this matter; but I would not, knowing that, the more I spoke, the more these complaints would grow." The disciple answers, "Just now, when I sat writing, I heard a sound as of a toad within mine own belly; and this is oftentimes so; wherefore I do indeed fear that I may perchance have somewhat of this sort within me. And, if I had had aught of the kind before hearing this from you, and if it had continued, I should believe that I had indeed a toad in my belly." "Ah," replies Richalm, "they do this daily unto me."

Headache, indigestion and melancholy were common monastic complaints, especially when regular labour had become less of a reality; when the main work was done by lay brethren or hired servants, and the priest-monk, if he laboured at all, did so fitfully and as a matter of rather unwelcome duty. St Bernard's sufferings from dyspepsia surpassed even those of Baxter and Carlyle and General Booth. Richalm was evidently amongst the many who had not that "stupidity and sound digestion" which Teufelsdröckh postulated as a necessary foundation for optimism. The powers of evil frequently succeeded in giving him a feeling of nausea in choir<sup>1</sup>. He once overheard a demon complaining to another that he (Richalm) could not be tortured this matin-tide with his usual huskiness of voice:

"for, this time, he has no inflation of the stomach to help me." (That

<sup>1</sup> 379; cf. 382, 420-4, 390, 416, 440, 452.

was one of their sharpest weapons); "oftentimes they swell my belly, so that I need to loosen my girdle beyond all wont and measure. But, when they chance to forget and slacken their efforts, then I tighten my girdle as before; but then again they return and find me thus, and pinch and constrict me; but I bear my pain. This day we have drunk good wine; and, behold! there is now a multitude of intoxicating demons throughout the Parlour here, hovering over us and around us. So was it also on All Saints' Day; I ought to have told you this when we drank that good wine; so great was the multitude of intoxicating devils there congregated, that I could walk nowhere either in Cloister or Church; but especially in Cloister, about the Parlour and Refectory. Yet on the morrow all were vanished, and the Cloister was emptied of them."—"Whither then had they fled?"—"Doubtless they had come from those taverns, and had been summoned and invited to our company; those devils who are always with us called in these others to their aid."—"What, then, was their work here?"—"They make a man drunken; they make him drunken even without wine... Behold, I am now troubled with coughing and flatulence; that is their work. Lately I drank a little wine, by occasion whereof they have sent me this flatulence and gripes, to the intent that I may cease from my wine; yet wine is good for me, and a cordial to my natural complexion. So also have they filled brother So and So with such a horror of wine, that even at the Holy Sacrifice, at the ablation, he must needs take water... See, I am now hoarse... The devils would fain stir me to dislike of nuts, that I might believe my hoarseness to come from these nuts that we have... Do you not hear a sound as of rubbing?"—"Indeed, I hear a wondrous, yet not unaccustomed sound; it would seem to proceed from some distemper of your stomach or bowels, such as we suffer daily."—"Nay, but it is the demon's sound; it is not as you think."—"I should have found it hard to believe you, considering the quality of that sound."—"Nay, but even the groan that you uttered even now was not your own. Have you not perpended how brother So and So groans thus, and loudly?"—"I have perpended indeed"—"That also is their doing..."—"But what profit do the demons find herein?"—"That they may disquiet the brother next unto him."

Devils creep into Richalm's teeth and make them ache; they swarm under his garments with the bodily semblance and the bloodthirsty appetite of fleas. The victim is tempted "to scratch himself after an unseemly fashion," and the devil has gained a petty triumph. Their ubiquity, indeed, is inconceivable, or conceivable only by an *illuminé* like Richalm.

It is marvellous that any one of us should still be alive; were it

not for God's grace, no one of us could escape<sup>1</sup>. They ride like motes in the sunbeam; they are scattered everywhere like dust; they come down upon us like rain; their multitude fills the whole world; the whole air, the whole air, I say, is but a thick mass of devils.

We have already seen how they spread like pestilential bacilli from the tavern to the cloister; in the same way, the monks often catch them by contagion from their guests, who bring familiar demons about their persons.

I myself (says Richalm) caught them from Brother William, when we were together in Infirmary; they left him and fastened upon me. I hear them in the voice of birds, and in the plashing water that falls into the Cloister basin. They flock thick and fast to the Parlour, where they are sure to find levity somewhere in our talk; they would fain persuade me to indulge the brethren now and then with a little more than the statutory time for conversation. They haunt us worst of all on our deathbed. But they are always and everywhere in wait for us, like an arrow fitted to a bended bow and pointed at our breast<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, they have a hierarchy and a discipline like our own<sup>3</sup>. They have their officers, their rank and file, and a most elaborate military organization. They show the courage and endurance of soldiers.

These evil spirits have their regular officers in every monastery, told off to fight against each of our officials. For instance, the Abbot's adversary is called Abbot among them, the Prior's is called Prior,

<sup>1</sup> 396; cf. 421, 410, 443, 426, 419, 427, 417, 415, 453, 460, 406.

<sup>2</sup> Their innumerable multitude was a commonplace; the blessed Giovanni d'Alvernia "had a marvellous power against the demons, whom he put to flight everywhere with wondrous authority and ease. Sometimes he was seen, walking in the road, to run after them and drive them off with his staff, casting it from him against their fleeing figures. Monte Alverno [where he had his hermitage] was so beset with multitudes of demons that the very air seemed thick and dark with them; yet he would run fearlessly hither and thither, beating these airy spirits as he might with his staff, and following after them in their retreat until he had chased that evil host from the whole mountain. They sought to trouble him with many illusions. . . but he, calling on the name of Jesus and making the sign of the cross, drove them off like flies." (Wadding, *Annales*, an. 1322, §45.) Cf. Guibert, col. 890. St Gregory's story of the nun who swallowed a devil sitting on a lettuce was repeated from one moralist to another all down the Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> 401; cf. 444, 422, 438, 440, 435, 406. This hierarchy is emphasized by others; cf. Cassian, *Coll.* vii, cc. 17-21, 32; Vinc. Beauvais, *Spec. Nat.* l. ii, c. 113; Guibert, col. 869; Meffret, *de Temp.* p. 109; the devil has his own altars, from which rises the steam of sinners' banquets; his own sabbaths, the sinner's indolent repose; his sacrifices, from men's gluttony; his oblations, the scot-ales and lechery in taverns, etc., etc.



the Precentor's is their Precentor, and so forth. . . They perform thus their duties not confusedly and promiscuously, but each with steadfast application to his own office, except perchance when there is some greater business in hand, as when a soul is about to leave the body; then they flock thither in multitudes, but not without their Superior's permission"<sup>1</sup>. If we have a special reverence for a particular saint or a particular feast, then a demon is told off to stand between us and him or it. They have even their universities and their formal studies in the art of slaying souls, as we have in theology. Therefore "they talk Latin also, taking wondrous pains to speak that tongue in good order and without corrupt errors."

Hence their extraordinary intellectual success:

"They interpose and intermingle so many false illusions, bringing in numberless falsehoods to cover even a single point of truth; lest men should be able to discern the truth, which is thus confounded by admixtures of falsehood."

Only by God's grace can any man survive all this; and the best shield against the Devil is a good life<sup>2</sup>. Our guardian angel, also, helps us much. Next to these, our best weapons are holy water and the sign of the cross. "Magna est Sacramentorum salis et aquae efficacia"; the whole air is full of devils when I come into church; they rush upon me as I approach the holy-water stoup; then, as I sprinkle myself, they flee. Nay, plain salt has some of this efficacy also; "often, at table, when the demons have robbed me of my appetite for food, I have tasted a grain of salt and my appetite has revived."

The sign of the cross puts them to flight:

"They can do nothing against the sign of the cross. Yet it is true that they sometimes make a stand even against this, yielding only slowly. Even as a doughty warrior will suffer himself to be wounded, and pierced through and through, before he gives way, so also is it with them, even though they suffer grievous torments from this sacred sign." Moreover, our victory is often short lived; here, as after the holy-water, they are soon back again—*ad brevissimam horam valet, quia mox redeunt*. It is more efficacious to make this sign on one's bare flesh, "over the heart, that is, under the left pap; there I make great signs of the cross, from the neck even unto the waist." The other night I felt sleepless; I set myself to make this sign over and over again, and was soon asleep.

<sup>1</sup> For their special attendance at monks' deathbeds see also St-Cher, vi, 87, 2.

<sup>2</sup> 409; cf. 386, 418, 425, 430, 379.

The pupil opines that it must be very laborious to sign oneself so frequently and on so elaborate a scale; and Richalm admits this.

But never was any labour better worth while. The omnipresence and the power of the demon is fully realized only by the few who have received this power of second sight. The pupil sometimes betrays signs of polite incredulity when his faith has been subjected to some special strain; and Richalm can sympathize with these doubts. He admits that more things have been revealed to himself than can be found in the Bible or the Fathers:

"I have found little in the Holy Scriptures of these matters, in comparison with the actual evils wherein we poor wretches are held and vexed"<sup>1</sup>. "God hath revealed unto me such things as I could never fully expound to any man, nor he fully believe; things greater and stranger than I have ever found in any scriptures." "If I were openly to disclose many things which are revealed unto me, men would stone me." "A few years ago, if any man had told me [that every sound we hear is the sound of a demon], I should have accounted him a madman."

Yet it is of supreme importance that this knowledge should be made accessible to the faithful. As the pupil says in his prologue:

the main theme of these revelations is, that the sole malignity of the devil be set forth; concerning which we ought to believe all the snares and treachery and malice and iniquity that human tongue can tell. Yet methinks no man, who knoweth what he hath lost and what are those thieves among whom he fell in going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, will fail to give easy credence to these things. Let that man disbelieve whose home is in this world, to whom solitude is a prison, a latrine is a palace, darkness is light, and filth seems heaven. Let those doubt the truth of this matter who have not known the height and the wickedness of Satan.

The whole book is a commentary on what the Cluniac Ralph Glaber had written two centuries earlier, that the whole world was full of "manifold deceptions of demons or men" (P.L. 142, col. 675). And hundreds of monastic records might be quoted by way of illustration or epilogue to this text. The whole of a great abbey might be momentarily given over to the devil,

<sup>1</sup> 379; cf. 410, 415, 416, 377.

with the town which had grown up under its shelter. In 1116, as the Peterborough chronicler tells us, his home caught fire for the second time<sup>1</sup>:

The monastery was burned, and the whole town with it. For on that day the Abbot had cursed the abbey, and in his wrath (for he was a very wrathful man) he rashly sent it to the devil. For the brethren had gone into the refectory that morning to amend the tables<sup>2</sup>; and this displeased him; and he cursed his curse and went forthwith to hold a plea at Castor. Moreover a certain servant who was kindling a fire in the bakery<sup>3</sup>, seeing that it burned but slowly, cried *Come, devil, and blow this fire!* whereupon it blazed forth and reached even unto the roof, and flew from office to office even into the town. . . And thus, by the work of the devil who had been invoked, and by God's sufferance for our own sins' sake, the whole abbey and town were burnt, and all the bells were broken, and the fire continued in the tower for nine whole days; but in the ninth night there arose a mighty wind and scattered the fire and live embers from this tower upon the Abbot's lodgings, so that we feared all those offices must now burn which hitherto had been spared. Truly, that day was a day of grief and pain.

<sup>1</sup> Dugdale-Caley, I, 350, b.

<sup>2</sup> Probably to alter the tablets on which were written the standing orders for the week.

<sup>3</sup> The text, by an obvious error, has *pristino* for *pistrino*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE LORD OF DARKNESS

IT is true that Richalm treats the subject more systematically and in greater detail than any other, and that it might, as he admits, be difficult to find any "scriptura" corroborating his belief that all worldly noises are made by demons. Yet his doctrine seemed of great value not only to contemporaries but to post-Reformation scholars of his church; and it would not be difficult to compose a catena of passages from other and better-known medieval writers which would justify all the main assertions in his book. All the monastic autobiographers show, incidentally, something very near to Richalm's consciousness of demoniac omnipresence and power. Ralph Glaber, Othloh of St Emmeram, Guibert of Nogent, Caesarius of Heisterbach, Salimbene of Parma, all show this overwhelming sense of dualism in religion. St Bonaventura is sometimes quoted, by those who seem imperfectly acquainted with his actual writings, as an example of the tenderness introduced by Franciscanism into medieval philosophy. There is a grain of truth in this, but hardly what these modern writers imply. His teaching frequently emphasizes the severe and gloomy side of religion; and he, like nearly all medieval theologians, anticipated many of the doctrines which most people associate with seventeenth century Puritanism. He has no hope of salvation for unbaptized infants, nor does he doubt the joy which the just will find in the pains of the damned<sup>1</sup>. In many of his mystical works and those of his school, if not in most, it is assumed that the first step towards God is that of conscious flight from hell<sup>2</sup>. Long before this, Christ had become so much associated with the severity of the Last Judgement, and His office of propitiator had dwindled so much in proportion to the Virgin Mary's, that we scarcely recognize the real spirit of the Pauline epistles in official theology. It is astonishing, for instance, how seldom the triumphant

<sup>1</sup> See appendix I A.

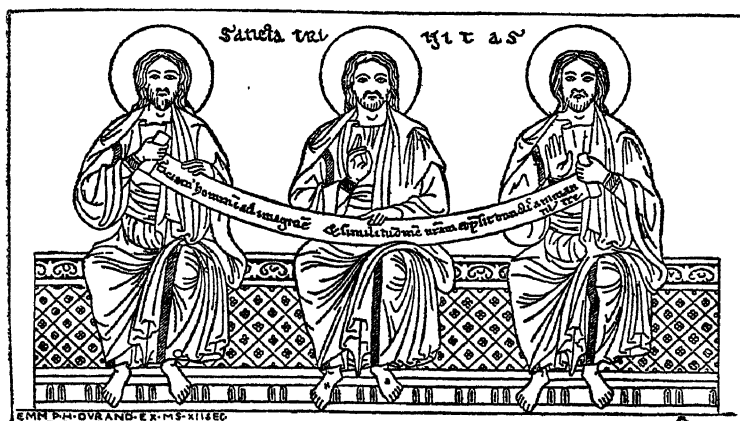
<sup>2</sup> A conspicuous exception is the *De Gradibus Virtutis*; here the contemplation of the Last Judgement and Hell comes only in ch. 28.

Catholic of the thirteenth century made full use of that most triumphant chapter in the whole Bible, the eighth to the Romans, in comparison with other passages of far less spiritual force<sup>1</sup>.

For even Bonaventura was a man of his time; and it is a fatal error to regard religion as a thing which, coming pure from God in the past, has gradually been debased by man. There was in medieval religion a strain of coarseness unavoidable among those ruder conditions of life. Men were even more at the mercy of visual representations, and therefore of anthropomorphic conceptions, than in our own day. It is only with the mid-twelfth century that spiritual refinement comes even into French statuary; it developed far later in most other lands; and, to the very last, the average of medieval art was more conspicuous for vivid effect than for refinement; we must not be misled by the statues of Chartres and Reims, for instance, which are not typical but exceptional. The church building was the Bible of the Poor; but it was often a strangely unbiblical Bible<sup>2</sup>. The great majority of paintings and carvings had no reference either to the Old Testament or the New, but to the legends of the saints; and, even where the representations were more definitely doctrinal than this, they lent themselves to popular conceptions which no man would defend in our own day. The Trinity which scandalized Wyclif may still be seen surviving on walls or windows: three solemn figures identical in their features; or one three-headed person; or a triad distinguished by emblems, just as three saints might be; or (commonest of all) a group of the Old

<sup>1</sup> A computation from the admirable list supplied by the Quaracchi editors in their index-volume of Bonaventura's works shows that he quotes from the Song of Solomon more than twice as often, in proportion to its length, than from the Epistle to the Romans. The former, of course, was expounded mystically of Christ and His Church and the Soul. Ch. viii, v. 6, is quoted 38 times: "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." On the other hand, the whole of the last five verses of Romans viii—the passage beginning "who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—supply only 27 quotations between them.

<sup>2</sup> The question of the Bible in the Middle Ages is far too wide for discussion here; one side of the subject has lately been treated exhaustively in Miss Deanesly's *Lollard Bible*; and I have tried to summarize the whole very briefly in a pamphlet, *The R. C. Church and the Bible* (Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1921). Even as a fetish, the Bible lost its power: "When your parishioners swear," writes Giraldus Cambrensis, "they have less fear for the holy book of the Gospels than for the relics of saints" (R.S. II, 158).

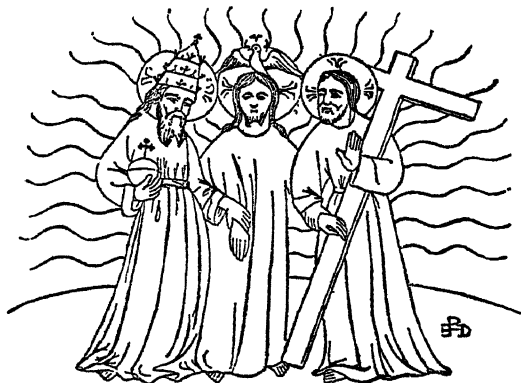


The Indistinguishable Triad. (From Didron.)



Three in One. (*Ibid.*)

Man with papal crown, the Crucifix, and the Dove<sup>1</sup>. Church art dealt in theory with the supersensuous; but, in fact, it was often crudely materialistic, and filled the popular mind with ineradicable crudities. Even Abailard, if the tradition was right which ascribed to him that image of the Trinity in his abbey of Paraclete, thought fit to put these anthropomorphic conceptions before the rank and file of his monks<sup>2</sup>. Yet here was a danger

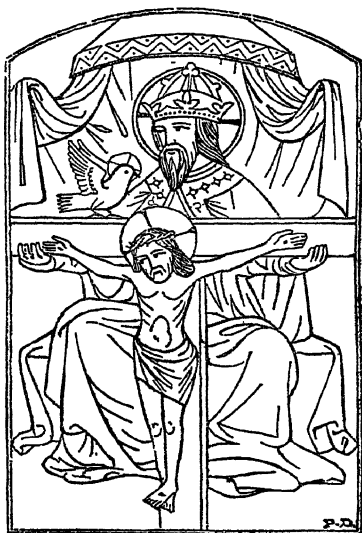


The Emblematic Three. (From Didron.)

<sup>1</sup> Wyclif "acknowledges it also to be indisputable that images may be made with a good design, when it is done for the purpose of stirring up the believing to a devout adoration of God Himself. But, on the other hand, he recalls the fact that in the early church images were not used in such great numbers as they are at present. Nor does he conceal the fact that the use of images operates mischievously on men's minds in more than one direction. It leads, e.g. to error in the faith, and to the idea that God the Father and the Holy Ghost are corporeal, when the Trinity is represented by artists in such a way that God the Father appears as an old man who holds between His knees God the Son hanging upon the cross, while God the Holy Ghost lights down in the form of a dove upon them both, and such like. Very many besides have fallen into the error of taking an image for something animated, and solemnly bowing to it, which indisputably is idolatry. Many also have been led to believe in miracles performed by the image, a superstition resting upon mere delusion, or at most a diabolical deception." (*J. W. and his English Precursors*, by Prof. Lechler, trans. P. Lorimer, 1878, II, III.)

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, *Ann. Bened.* vi, 85. The representation there described answers almost exactly to the second of these four in the text, except that at the Paraclete, Christ was in the centre; He was crowned with thorns and the Holy Ghost with olive; the Father alone was shod, and the features of all three Persons were identical. A century later, the Court of Heaven appeared very differently to a holy visionary; she saw a vast procession of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and other faithful souls,

which great churchmen recognized even in the Middle Ages, as the ablest among Roman Catholic students have recognized it in more modern times. One of the greatest among the Bollandists, Father Henschen, shows how medieval iconography has encouraged idle legend. He is apologizing for an obviously apocryphal life of two saints who, having been decapitated for the faith, took up their heads and carried them to their final burying-place. It was not possible to write with absolute liberty in 1788, while the sacristan of St Denis was still telling visitors to that royal abbey how the patron saint had carried his own head thither from Paris, six miles distant<sup>1</sup>. But concerning two obscure saints at St Wandrille Henschen could express himself more freely; and he writes:



The Trinity Group. (*Ibid.*)

I have no more to say about this story than that, when once it had become customary in France for sculptors or painters to represent all the saints who were thought to have been decapitated as holding that same head in their hands against their breast, then that popular error thrived whereby they were fancied to have taken up their several heads after death and carried the same to the place where their remains were worshipped. This might indeed have happened

each with a waxen taper, moving two and two towards the Temple of Heaven for High Mass; [for she was evidently ignorant of the Johannine word: "And I saw no temple therein."] "Last of all, with His Mother, came our Saviour, who is the Head of all the Saints, the Splendour of Glory and the Sun of Righteousness, in pontifical vestments, with a mitre on His head, and staff and gloves and rings and the other ornaments of a bishop." They struck up an anthem to the Virgin Mary and went into the Temple, where Christ celebrated at the altar, St Stephen read the Epistle, and St John Evangelist the Gospel. (Caes. Heist. II, 26.)

<sup>1</sup> Félibien (p. 77), follows his still more learned brother Mabillon in declining to pronounce on the truth either of this miracle or of the identification of St Denis with Dionysius the Areopagite, which Abailard had doubted so much to his own cost.



once or twice<sup>1</sup>; but, when once we have recognized the false principle which has deceived so many, we cannot prudently believe it of any saint whose legend is not of the most absolute genuineness, and far removed by the undoubted credibility of its authors from all suspicion of interpolation. This fashion of representing decapitated martyrs is founded on that excellent reason given by St John Chrysostom in his 40th homily, on SS. Juventinus and Maximus, who were slain at Antioch on Jan. 25. "Even as soldiers who can speak with confidence while they point to their wounds received in their king's battles, so also can these martyrs gain all their petitions to the King of Heaven when they display in their hands those heads which they lost for Him"<sup>2</sup>.

This danger which Henschen saw so clearly had been almost as evident to medieval churchmen who thought seriously about the art of their times. The system of religious symbolism which often seems so perfect to the modern antiquary or sentimentalist presented a very different side to men of deep piety in its own day, who were primarily concerned with the religion of their flocks. Guillaume Durand, bishop of Mende, nephew to that Guillaume Durand whose book on Symbolism has been so much idealized since the Oxford Movement, speaks very plainly on this subject in his memorial to the

<sup>1</sup> The learned Jesuit may almost claim to have anticipated Mme du Deffand's brilliant *mot* which Heine paid her the compliment of "conveying": "Vous me demandez mon mot de Saint Denis, cela est bien plat à raconter, mais vous le voulez. Monsieur le Cardinal de Polignac, beau diseur, grand conteur, et d'une excessive crédulité, parlait de Saint Denis, et disait que quand il eut la tête coupée, il la prit et la porta entre ses mains. Tout le monde sait cela; mais tout le monde ne sait pas qu'ayant été martyrisé sur la montagne de Montmartre, il porta sa tête de Montmartre à Saint-Denis, ce qui fait l'espace de deux grandes lieues. . . . 'Ah!' lui dis-je, 'Monseigneur, je croirais que dans une telle situation il n'y a que le premier pas qui coûte.'" (*Lettres de Mme du Deffand à Horace Walpole* (ed. Toynbee), I, 278.)

<sup>2</sup> Many instances might be given of this popular misinterpretation of medieval sculpture; see, for instance, the story of the champion Hickfrick of Tilney, in Weever's *Funeral Monuments*, 1631, p. 866. It is probable that the belief in Bishop Bytton's tomb in Wells Cathedral as a shrine for toothaches is derived from its proximity to the grotesque toothache-capital in the south transept; the inverse explanation which has been attempted (*e.g.* in Dr Dearmer's monograph on Wells), is far more difficult to reconcile with the dates. In St Agostino della Zecca at Naples is a most realistic statue of a female martyr (St Agatha?) with a dagger thrust in at the collar-bone; this has become the patron-saint of Naples stiletto-men; large numbers of knives and daggers are hung round it in commemoration of successful affrays; the same may be seen by an altar in Salerno cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> AA.SS. Maii, I, 38.



SS. ACHE AND ACHEUL, AMIENS CATHEDRAL



Pope and the General Council of Vienne in 1311<sup>1</sup>. After recalling how some of the earlier Councils had forbidden images in churches "because among many peoples the said pictures and images are thought ridiculous, and specially by reason of the many diversities of figures and the falsehoods which are found therein," he continues:

it would seem profitable that the ordinaries and church authorities should destroy all ill-formed images and all which deviate from the truth of things as they happened... Since the aforesaid pictures and images are held in the place of scripture and of testimony, that the beholders may thereby be roused to devotion and to the knowledge of things as they happened, it would seem that the Church should tolerate no error therein, seeing that an error, if unresisted, is held for a truth, according to the words of Pope Innocent in Canon Law [Gratian, pars 1, dist. lxxxiii, c. 3]; nor should anything else be suffered which, for its unshapeliness or any other cause, would seem to give matter for laughter and derision and in-devotion.

John Myrc, who knew English parish life well, tells us in one of his sermons how sadly the common folk were apt to mistake even the most ordinary ecclesiastical symbolism. "These four Evangelists be likened to four divers beasts, and so be painted in four parties of Christ<sup>2</sup>; that is, for Mark a lion, for Matthew a man, for Luke a calf, and for John an eron [eagle]. Wherefore many lewd men ween that they were beasts and not men." He goes on to explain at great length that these were four writers, and why each was symbolized in this particular form; he himself does not seem to realize how the symbolism comes originally from Ezekiel (i, 10). In the pseudo-Chaucerian *Tale of Beryn*, again, the description of the pilgrims' behaviour in Canterbury Cathedral conveys a suggestion of ignorance almost as great as that of the modern tourist. Moreover such ignorance was almost inevitable under the circumstances; symbolism in medieval art was far less logical and systematic, far less consistent, and far less universal, than modern antiquaries imagine. The medieval artist very often chose his motives simply because he liked them, finding them either in his own brain or in artistic, as distinct from religious, tradition. Carvers

<sup>1</sup> *Tractatus*, P. II, tit. 57 (p. 187).

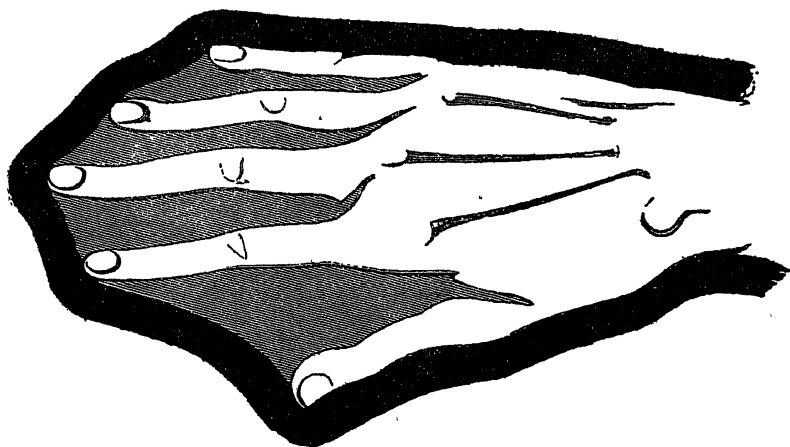
<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* flanking the painting of Christ, one at each corner.

and painters were not merely the docile mouthpieces of their clerical employers; they were primarily artists; only secondarily were they theologians; indeed, they were often theologians only under protest<sup>1</sup>. To many of them, ecclesiastical tradition was a bondage from which they escaped as often and as far as they could; only thus, even if we had no more direct evidence, could we fully explain the frank revolt of the Renaissance<sup>2</sup>. St Bernard, in his letter to Guillaume de St-Thierry, had shown the difficulty of marrying a free art to a pure religion<sup>3</sup>. The artist took very much his own way, as the people took their own way with dance and profane song, in spite of strict ecclesiastical prescriptions. The sculptor ran riot in grotesques; the churchman might indeed expound these monsters symbolically if he chose; but, as a matter of fact, this mania for tracing symbols everywhere is a modern exaggeration based upon the exaggeration of one or two medieval writers, who tried to systematize that which, in their own day, they found too unsystematic. Much well-known symbolism there certainly was; but artistic impulses account for far more, and ecclesiastical doctrine for far less, than modern writers ordinarily suppose. It was the realism of medieval art which most impressed Vasari. The statue of a king, placed fifty feet above the spectator's eye, and involved in the intricacies of niche-work and buttress, must be emphasized in its royalty; hence those exaggerations of attitude which so admirably justify themselves on the west fronts

<sup>1</sup> Consider, for instance, the obscenities found among medieval grotesques, even in monastic churches, as in the choir-screen carvings of St Margaret's at Lynn.

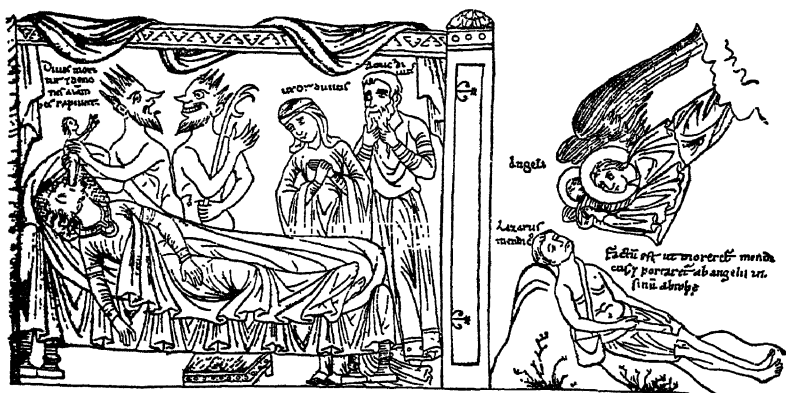
<sup>2</sup> Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, 1870, §§ 42-65: "Do not wilfully use the realistic power of art to convince yourselves of historical or theological statements which you cannot otherwise prove. . . We shall find that the best art is the work of good, but of not distinctively religious men. . . I am neither disputing nor asserting the truth of any theological doctrine—that is not my province—I am only questioning the expediency of enforcing that doctrine by the help of architecture. . . It is just because the feelings that I most desire to cultivate in your minds are those of reverence and admiration, that I am so earnest to prevent you from being moved to either by trivial or false semblances." Cf. *Crown of Wild Olive*, § 66: "Good architecture has always been the work of the commonalty, not of the clergy"; in a footnote, he extends this to the arts generally. But see, especially, the whole of pt iv, ch. iv, in *Modern Painters*.

<sup>3</sup> The most important passages of St Bernard's letter may be found in my *Medieval Garner*, especially pp. 71-2: the saint's words have been too much neglected by writers on medieval symbolism.



Jacob's face, and conventionalized hand.

of Exeter or Wells. Jacob, weeping over Joseph's bloody coat in the pictured windows of Bourges, must have a face that tells its own tale; whatever else the spectator fails to see, he must not doubt that this is an old man in the extremity of grief. An outstretched hand in the glass must emphasize its knuckles and the division of the fingers; photographic drawing would be false in that particular place. I must recur to this subject later; meanwhile, it may suffice to point out what has been too often neglected, the artist's preponderant share in this Bible of the Poor, and the materialism thus encouraged in the worshipper's mind. At bottom, that was a more materialistic age than ours,



The extraction of souls. (Herrad v. Landsperg.)

as might naturally be expected; civilization, however slowly it may work, does bring an increased power of rising from the concrete to the abstract. The sceptical emperor, Frederick II, thought to disprove the existence of the human soul by shutting a man up in a hermetically-sealed cask. No soul was found with the corpse when the cask was opened, there was no rift or point through which a soul could have escaped; therefore there is no such factor in human life. Yet this was perhaps one degree less absurd than the orthodox conception of the soul as a naked child carried by angels to Abraham's bosom, or as a crystal sphere with eyes in every part<sup>1</sup>.

We may see the same if we turn for a moment from plastic

<sup>1</sup> MGH. *Scriptt.* xxxii, 351; Caes. Heist. I, 39, 208, II, 160, 276.

art to the spectacular art of the medieval church. The miracle-play was evolved from such dramatic services as the seeking of the Risen Lord at Easter, or the Crib at Bethlehem. Miracle-play and plastic art acted and reacted upon each other, until a convention was formed which was common to both<sup>1</sup>. And here, again, we find that spiritual religion was inevitably reduced to a popular level. The comic side of these services sometimes became almost as important as the serious; Feast of Fools, Boy-Bishop, Abbot of Unreason held their own in spite of the stricter disciplinarians; and, so far as the sixteenth century differed here from the thirteenth, it was in greater licence of riot. The pathos of the miracle-play—*e.g.* Isaac's farewell to Abraham—is weak compared with Herod's ranting, or the farce of the sheepstealers or Noah's wife<sup>2</sup>. Medieval art was, as William Morris never wearied of repeating, a People's Art, with all the strength and vitality that this implies. But it had also the defects of its qualities, the defects inherent in all popularization; nor could it assist popular religion to rise higher than its own source. The Church, by dint of emphasizing the things that appealed visibly to simple folk, gradually materialized her own doctrines. The Gospel-Christ, with His apostles, was re-fashioned by the Middle Age after its own image; negatively, by a change of emphasis and perspective; and, positively, by actual accretions; and this is specially true of the cloister. Here we have predominantly the suffering figure on the cross, whose blood, like that of Abel, cries for vengeance as well as for pity<sup>3</sup>. Or, again, He is the central figure of the Last Judgement—*Districus Judex*—to whom, in face of the large majority of mankind, justice forbids the exercise of mercy. At the beginning of spiritual life, "a man must look around him at three things: the day of death, so close at hand, the freshly-shed blood of Christ, and the face of the Judge confronting him." Only after this *viam purgativam* can he tread the *viam illuminativam*, and

<sup>1</sup> See Emile Mâle, *L'Art Religieux de la Fin du M.-Â.* 1908, pp. 12 ff. But even Mâle, in this and in the earlier companion volume, exaggerates the ecclesiastical at the expense of the artistic influence in this evolution, and assigns too great a part to conscious symbolism.

<sup>2</sup> These may be read in the volume *Everyman with other Interludes* in Everyman Library, pp. 50, 93, 62 ff., 33 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See Ruskin's comment on this in *Lectures on Art*, II, §§ 56, 57; and compare *Modern Painters*, pt ix, ch. iii, § 7.



thence ascend to greater heights of religion<sup>1</sup>. The medieval mind would have found it difficult to understand the attitude of a pagan who could imprecate, as a grisly curse, upon those who disturbed his son's ashes, "if any man violate this urn, let him not be received into the infernal regions"<sup>2</sup>. Under the circumstances, it was quite natural that most men should put the fear of the devil as prior in time, at least, to the fear of God.

This must be borne in mind when we speak of the close alliance between Church and State in the Middle Ages. The thing itself may be exaggerated; I think it is exaggerated in our own day by those who study mainly the medieval theorists, and forget the man in the street. The publicists of that age were, indeed, unanimous or nearly unanimous in proclaiming the theoretical identity of Church and State; in assuming that the City of God and the Earthly City were one body under two different aspects; but, meanwhile, the ordinary man was becoming more and more conscious of their dualism. It would be no more than a counterbalance of exaggeration to insist that Chaucer's England, for instance—which, of course, was Wyclif's England also—was as keenly conscious of the conflict between Church and State as modern society is. For there had grown up in fact, however theory might gloss it over, a very illegitimate limitation since the days when Augustine had sketched that ideal of the two powers which dominated succeeding centuries. To Augustine, in the deepest sense, the Church is the whole community of faithful people. A century and a half later, under Gregory the Great, the Church is rather the official institution as represented in its hierarchy; the people are not formally excluded, but they fall into the background. Then, with the progressive victories of Pope after Pope in the struggle with the Empire, the original democracy becomes an undisguised autocracy, until at last the Pope can say, even more truly than Louis XIV, "L'Etat, c'est moi."

Yet, if only in theory, Church and State were more at one in those days; but in virtue of what compromise? for the dualism

<sup>1</sup> Bonaventura, *Incendium Amoris (De Triplici Via)*. This is one of the saint's undoubtedly genuine works.

<sup>2</sup> "Ollam eius si quis inviolabit, ad inferos non recipiatur." Quoted in W. Fleetwood's *Inscriptionum Antiquarum Sylloge*, 1691, p. 256.

indicated by St Augustine is as eternal as the unity for which he contends. Was the medieval state more Christian than ours? Would it not be truer to say, on the other hand, that medieval Christianity was more deeply steeped in statecraft? Under Louis IX of France, one European country had for once a king not only great among kings, but guided by real Christianity; yet where shall we find another? It is only bare justice to the medieval Popes to emphasize the superior equity and wisdom and consistency of their policy in comparison with that of the secular princes their contemporaries and rivals; yet how deeply were even these Popes ingrained with the dye of worldly politics! Even Innocent III, when his crusaders had pillaged Constantinople against God's law and papal prohibitions, accepted the *fait accompli* and insisted on his share of the spoils<sup>1</sup>. Our Edward I expelled the Jews, possibly, though not certainly, under a mainly religious impulse; yet Popes and prelates, as a rule, were among the steadiest patrons and protectors of usurers<sup>2</sup>. To emphasize the identity of Church and State in the Middle Ages is, implicitly, to emphasize the change from apostolic Christianity: no Church could have become coextensive with those medieval states without a frightful dilution of its original ideals. We must give all honour to an institution which went down into the arena for us, and grappled with that barbarism of untaught nations, and was defiled with that which it daily touched. Gregory's letter to Mellitus bishop of London breathes the soundest common sense; destroy the Saxon idols, but keep their temples as churches, "that they may the more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed." As to their religious feasts, let them "no more offer beasts to the devil, but kill cattle to the praise of God in their eating. . . for there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface

<sup>1</sup> A. Luchaire, *Innocent III. La Question d'Orient*, 1907, ch. ii, esp. pp. 102-48.

<sup>2</sup> Alvarus Pelagius, *De Planctu*, bk II, art. vii, c. (fol. 103 a). Less well known, and even more emphatic, are the criticisms of the fifteenth century Franciscan in *Summa Angelica* (s.v. *Usura*, II, 14), who complains that usurers are protected by princes, for the sake of gain, "by a custom of immemorial antiquity, and by the tolerance of the Roman Pontiffs, more especially in those states which are directly subject to the Church." He goes on to point out that not even a Pope can legalize a thing like this, which is sinful in its very essence. The 1521 printer, perhaps scandalized at this free speech, has changed the *Papa non potest* of other editions into *Papa potest*.

everything at once from their obdurate minds...that, whilst they offered the same beasts which they were wont to offer, they should offer them to God and not to idols"<sup>1</sup>. The Church Ales of the Middle Ages are probably the lineal descendants of these Saxon feasts. How this same policy was carried out among converts in other lands, we may see from several examples noted by Mabillon in his *Acta Sanctorum* (Saec. iv, ii, p. 376 and v, pp. 463, 4). Drinking-bouts (*compotationes*) were held "for love of" such and such a saint. A suppliant named Liutnot, who had obtained favours at the tomb of St Udalric of Augsburg, "thenceforth firmly trusted in his help; and, when he was making merry, he would frequently drink for love of St Udalric, and was wont to call on others to drink to the same effect." One companion, thus challenged, refused, suggesting that the defunct Udalric "can no more work miracles than a dog"; he came soon to a miserable death. Another, less blasphemously refusing, was punished only for a time, and lived to challenge others to the toast no less enthusiastically than Liutnot. Liutnot himself, having once eaten and drunken enough, but being pressed to drink more by a man whom he dared not refuse, converted it to good by dedicating the draught to his beloved saint; "signed now with this loving-cup, I am assured that no adversary's wickedness can harm me, nor any sword wound me." The other strove to put this to a practical test by drawing his knife; he only cut his own fingers; and Liutnot, "strengthened in his faith, departed"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Hist. Ecc.* bk 1, ch. 30. I have briefly traced the pedigree of the Church Ale in the eighth of my *Medieval Studies*, pt II, pp. 3, 13.

<sup>2</sup> The fullest information on this subject is supplied by the four volumes of Th. Trede, *Das Heidentum in der Römischen Kirche* (Gotha, Perthes, 1889-91). Trede was chaplain in the Naples district, where Protestantism has scarcely been known even by name, and the people have lived on in their medieval ideas. An Englishman far more anxious than Trede to see the best side of Roman Catholicism, Hurrell Froude, wrote back from Naples to his friends: "Since I have been out here, I have got a worse notion of the Roman Catholics than I had. I really do think them idolaters, though I cannot be quite confident of my information as it affects the character of the priests... What I mean by calling these people idolaters is, that I believe they look upon the Saints and the Virgin as good-natured people that will try to get them let off easier than the Bible declares, and that, as they don't intend to comply with the conditions on which God promises to answer prayers, they pray to them as a come-off. But this is a generalization for which I have not sufficient data." (R. H. Froude's *Remains*, 1, preface, p. xiii.)

That Christianity should have taken over so much tribal narrowness from Judaism, and so much demonology from Paganism, was perhaps inevitable. St Augustine, whose grandfather probably saw the introduction of the new state-religion, tells us plainly that the lukewarmness of his contemporaries was proportionate to their multitude. The good are few in comparison with the evil; churches are as crowded as theatres, yet therein the faithful are but a handful; "how many [Pagans], think you, my brethren, would fain be Christians, yet are offended by the evil lives of our brethren!"<sup>1</sup> Yet these earlier generations did impress one clear characteristic upon medieval thought; the vast majority of those who reflected seriously were dominated by the conviction that they had souls to save. There is, as Gierke points out, a note of appeal to the individual conscience in medieval political thought; an echo of that spiritual appeal which rings so loud in the Apocalypse: "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come! And let him that heareth say, Come. . . Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" But this appeal was materialized and debased with the general debasement of the religious standard. Ecclesiastical writers begin very early to note that miracles are dwindling in the Church<sup>2</sup>. Some, like Augustine and Gregory, are led thus into a higher spiritual plane, and recognize the comparative irrelevance of those signs and wonders which saints share with demons. Others, like the great Dominican Humbert de Romans, find in this decay of miracles a strong reason why the Church should fall back upon more worldly weapons of policy or force. The average person went lower still, and insisted that the Church should meet the innumerable miracles of Satan with miracles of her own; and to that popular demand even men like Gregory gave way, not by conscious concession, but as unable to resist the spirit of their time. The medieval purveyors of visions and wonders frequently tell us, in so many words, that they record these things in order to sustain the fainting faith of their contemporaries. Here, as in the canonization of saints and the institution of new devotions, it was frequently the higher authorities who followed the crowd, in spite of themselves and in obedience to an imperious popular

<sup>1</sup> *Enarr. in Psalm. xxx*, § 6; xxxix, § 10; *Cont. Faust. lib. xiii*, § 16.

<sup>2</sup> See the second chapter of my *Christ, St Francis and Today*, with notes.

demand, whether articulate or inarticulate. The people required lurid colours, and they got what they wanted. Even St Francis (as we shall see later) could not preach the Kingdom of God without laying very definite stress on Hell; and the friar-preachers after him were, perhaps, those who made the freest use of these darker touches<sup>1</sup>.

It is easy to exaggerate the sensitiveness of the medieval mind to religious impressions. The Oxford Revival judged mainly from the writings of a few elect souls, of a quality which is rare at all times and places. More recent writers, enlarging upon the religious spirit of the medieval multitude, have often mistaken mere acquiescence for positive inspiration, and have ignored the evidence which can be found for a good deal of active and passive opposition. Many slight and scattered hints go to corroborate the judgement passed in *Piers Plowman* on the majority of fourteenth century Englishmen:

The most party of this people that passeth on this earth,  
Have they worship in this world, they willen no better;  
Of other heaven than here hold they no tale<sup>2</sup>.

They were not very dissimilar to the stuff that General Booth had to work upon; and we may profitably consider what Booth confessed concerning his own methods<sup>3</sup>:

Nothing moves the people like the terrific. They must have hell-fire flashed before their faces, or they will not *move*. Last night I preached a sermon on Christ weeping over sinners, and only one came forward, though several confessed to much holy feeling and influence. When I preached about the harvest and the wicked being turned away, numbers came. We must have that kind of truth which will move sinners.

Medieval preachers and moralists take the same standpoint. There is no better index of thought among the average cultured classes than the great encyclopedia of the Middle Ages which bears the name of Vincent of Beauvais, but of which the fourth volume (*Speculum Morale*) is by a sub-contemporary hand,

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2D.

<sup>2</sup> B. I, 7. Gautier de Coincy, about 1200 A.D., had already stigmatized "the rich of our day... who are so in love with their wealth that they covet no other paradise or glory" (Lommatzsch, p. 9; cf. 20, 96-7). Compare Chaucer's agnostic words in *C. T. A.* 2809 ff. and *L. G. W.* Prol. 1-16, and see further in appendix 4, and in next chapter (v).

<sup>3</sup> *Life*, by Harold Begbie (1920), I, 228; cf. 276-86, and II, 162.

though on the same plan and drawn from the same materials. Here, the author frankly confesses the necessity of forcing the tone in order to secure attention.

"There are many," he says, "who condemn such visions and refuse credence to the narrators, deriding the stories as vulgar fables or lying inventions, or idle dreams of melancholy folk, or ravings of lunatics. We need not wonder if such tales get no credence from men who believe not in hell; or who, if they confess such a belief with their lips, yet meanwhile their deeds show neither faith nor fear, and perchance they would deny with their lips also, if they dared"<sup>1</sup>.

One clear proof of practical infidelity (he goes on to argue) is not only in the carelessness with which men sin, but in the indifference shown by kinsfolk, friends and executors for the souls of the dead:

the men of this world forget their friends and benefactors in purgatory . . . the dead man's debts or legacies are tardily and imperfectly paid; rare, few, or none are the alms given for their souls, or the prayers and other suffrages procured for them.

For the world is close upon its end:

let us consider any class of men, whether clergy or laity, subjects or rulers; let us note how indevout is their service to God, how lukewarm their worship, how irreverent their prayers, how dry the hearts which should give praise but which are in fact rather turned to scorn; mark how foully God is dishonoured and how detestably He is blasphemed, and we shall see clearly that love to God is not only waxing cold but is already so frozen that it seemeth well nigh dead.

And therefore he fills more than 100 great close-printed folio pages with anecdotes, sentences from the Fathers, and comments dealing with the Last Judgement and the Pains of Hell. He quotes at length that *Vision of Tundal*, attributed to the year 1149, which was one of the most popular of stories all through the Middle Ages, and which partly inspired Dante's *Inferno*<sup>2</sup>.

In all these stories, the mercy of Christ is far in the background; there is scarcely a hint of that serenity of Galilean life which Renan overemphasizes in the spirit of modern reaction.

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Morale*, lib. 11, pars iii, dist. 6 (ed. 1624, col. 840 d). The other quotations are from lib. 11, pars i, dist. 11 (745 c), and pars ii, dist. 2 (763 d).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 838. The gruesome details of this vision are summarized in T. Wright's *St Patrick's Purgatory*, pp. 32-9.

It is told of Bishop Ulfilas that, when he translated the Bible for his fellow-Goths, he omitted the earlier historical books of the Old Testament because his compatriots thought and heard quite enough of fighting without that additional stimulus. The Middle Ages made even the New Testament story into a fighting epic; and then, with their progress in civilization, into an epic of the law-courts.

The fighting epic begins already with the Gospel of Nicodemus, about 200 A.D. This was translated into the mystery play of *The Harrowing of Hell*<sup>1</sup>, and it reappears in the concluding cantos of *Piers Plowman*. The devil has won a momentary appearance of victory in Christ's death; but the Saviour's descent to Hades is fatal to the rulers of darkness; for He bursts open their prison and calls all the souls of the righteous to heaven. Henceforward, to the end of time, Satan can wage only a guerilla warfare; yet this is fatal to millions of souls; for in the agony of others he always hopes to find some relief from his own.

But the Church soon developed also a legal theory of God and Satan; the world, lost through sin, had become the Devil's property; God Himself must not do injustice even to the Devil; something more valuable than the world must be given as a ransom for the world; thus Christ's death bought Humanity back from Satan. Starting partly in the East, this theory took a deeper hold upon the West. Imperial Rome had been strong in her legists; and, while Greek thought ran riot in philosophical speculations on religion, Roman thought tended more and more to legal systematization. The Faith was *Lex Dei*, God's decrees, not to be altered, but to be expounded and enforced by the church. The Lombard nobility, from very early times, had studied not only in arms but in law: Lanfranc's biographer tells us that his youthful legal studies were "after the fashion of the nobility of his nation." The Western church, therefore, took kindly to that view of the Atonement which represented it as the result of a lawsuit between God and the Devil. St Anselm first softened its crudities by stating it rather as a lawsuit between God's mercy and His justice; Abailard seems to have

<sup>1</sup> See the "Everyman" volume, pp. 149 ff. *The Gospel of Nicodemus* is easily accessible in W. Hone's *Apocryphal New Testament*; see especially chs. xiii-xxi.

dealt it a death-blow in higher philosophy<sup>1</sup>; but more popular religious thought constantly ran in these legalistic channels; and even Peter Lombard, after repeating his master Abailard's explanation, goes on to reproduce the older theory in one of its crudest forms. To Abailard, Christ's death was the earnest-money of our redemption; His love commands our love; His death justifies us by kindling this love in our hearts. But this was not enough for Peter, who must proceed to satisfy himself and his readers by a more materialistic explanation.

Mankind had fallen into the hands of the prince of this world, who seduced Adam and enslaved him, and began to possess us as born bondmen; but the Redeemer came and the Deceiver was conquered. What then did the Redeemer do to our Captivator? He set him His own cross as a mouse-trap, and laid His own blood there as a bait<sup>2</sup>.

From this idea there proceeded, among later theologians, even more unspiritual developments. The Austin canon Myrc is an invaluable witness in all matters of semi-popular theology; he represents the same class as Caesarius of Heisterbach and Bromyard—the learned cloisterer who has undertaken to instruct the ordinary parish priest, and whose instructions are much appreciated by the medieval public. Most significant, therefore, is that sermon on the Circumcision in which he explains how formally Christ outwitted Satan (p. 46):

The second cause was to deceive the Fiend. For, right as he deceived the mother of us all and so damned all mankind, right so lay Christ for to deceive him, wherethrough all mankind should be bought to the bliss again. Then, when the Fiend saw Christ circumcised as others were, he weened He had taken that penance in remedy of original sin, and so knew Him not from another sinful man. For if he had known Him readily that He had comen for to buy mankind out of his bondage, he would never have enticed men to have done Him to death. This was also the cause why our Lady was wedded to Joseph, for to deceive the Fiend, that he should ween that he [Joseph] was His father, and not conceived of the Holy Ghost.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr H. Rashdall's *Bampton Lectures*, and, more briefly, his *Doctrine and Development*, 1898, pp. 131 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Sententiarum* lib. III, dist. xix a. Just before going to press, I have had the advantage of meeting with Miss H. Traver's *Four Daughters of God* (Philadelphia, 1907) in which several of these questions are very fully worked out: I am specially indebted to Miss Traver for the indication of the *Processus Belial* series, both in print and in MSS.



Meffret, a generation or two later, gives exactly the same reason for Christ's circumcision: "even as the beaver castrateth himself to escape from the hunter, so did Christ undergo circumcision, that the Hell-Hunter might not perceive the mystery of the Incarnation." (*Fest.* p. 66.) In many cases the mystery of the Redemption was presented in an even more definitely legalistic form; e.g. in St Bernard's 1st Sermon on the Annunciation (§ 5 ff.). Hugh of St Victor, probably even earlier than this, wrote a formal dialogue between God and Satan, who dispute for man's soul in a series of legal quibbles<sup>1</sup>. Soon came a further development, with a poem ascribed to the Dutchman Maerlant (c. 1260), probably taken from an older source. Here, for the first time, the Virgin Mary comes in. God is the judge, Satan the prosecutor, and the Virgin offers herself as advocate for the defence<sup>2</sup>. Here we have the full-blown *Processus Belial*, in which theology condescends in detail to the unedifying procedure of the medieval lawcourt. The most unblushingly legalistic of these is called *Processus Sathanae*, and is ascribed to the great lawyer Bartholus of Sassoferato, probably only because it is printed in the early editions after an undoubted treatise of his. A single quotation may here suffice. When the Virgin appears in court, Satan objects that she must not be admitted as advocate (1) because no woman is allowed to be a barrister, and (2) because the Judge, being her son, would be too obviously biassed. Mary's answer to this begins; "Beware, my Son, lest perchance these quibbling allegations should fraudulently circumvent you in any particular"<sup>3</sup>.

This is the tract of a jurist who may or may not have been a theologian also by profession, but who fairly represents popular medieval theology. Quite apart from this formal *Processus Belial*, we stumble everywhere upon the most legalistic con-

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 177, col. 596 (on Ps. xv, 6) translated in appendix 5. Even if the dialogue be by some other Victorine, and not by Hugh himself, its antiquity is proved by the fact that we find it copied word for word in a sermon by Wernher, abbot of St Blasien, who died in 1126. (Traver, p. 12.)

<sup>2</sup> Traver, pp. 50-69. Miss Traver has kindly communicated to me a transcript from MS. Lansdowne, 397, ff. 169-71: *Qualiter Diabolus egit contra Xtum, petens sibi restitui humanum genus*, which is equally technical, but less interesting, in its legalism. At least three mss. of this treatise have survived; Miss Traver indicates also Ashmole 1398, ff. 253-61, thirteenth century, and Bodley, 52, ff. 1425, transcribed by John Waysforth of Merton Coll. Oxon.

<sup>3</sup> Bartholi *Tractatus Iudiciorum*, etc. (Paris, c. 1508), f. 18 a.

ceptions of man's relation to God. Sacchetti, arguing with Florentine business men, treats the Atonement as a commercial transaction made in due form before a judge<sup>1</sup>. The conception of the Last Day, especially, was entirely forensic. This comes out very strongly in *The Golden Legend* (Assumption of Our Lady, IV, 251). Again, the Dominican Bromyard writes: "There is a lawsuit between us and the devil. We have the privilege of bringing allegations and making exceptions against him and his lordship, until the definitive sentence of death. Confess, therefore, before death." In another place, he enters at great length into the legal aspects of this question, especially its analogies with feudal law; the passage is unfortunately too long for quotation here<sup>2</sup>.

In Germany, the common folk thought of Christ as dealing out His dooms in the high-handed fashion of a feudal lord in his own court:

Thus, some men who know no better say that our dear Lord sitteth on his judgement-seat on Ember-day Saturday in Lent, and that it is adjudged to every man what shall happen to him during the coming year, be it good or evil. That is a right lie and a great unfaith; for God hath given free choice unto man, that he may do as he will, whether for good or for evil; wherefore it is downright unbelief that every man is judged at that season. Others say that our dear Lord sitteth in judgement on St Thomas's day and giveth each man his doom, what shall befall him in the coming year; but that also is unfaith and heresy<sup>3</sup>.

Yet men clung still to these conceptions of God and Satan in terms of the law-courts of their day. Lancre, in that illuminating book which shows such startling medieval survivals among the Basques, tells a story very apposite to this purpose<sup>4</sup>:

In fact, about the 20th of July 1609 he [the devil] had three times absented himself from the ordinary Sabbaths held until then; and, (as one who had been at great pains to keep his followers from our hands, while we were prosecuting them with all ardour and diligence

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons*, no. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Sum. Praed.* A. vi, 6; cf. P. vii, 49, M. iv, 50, and P. vii, 58. In U. vii, 19 the saints are represented as coming one by one to bear witness at the Last Assize against the sinner, each saint urging the wretch's guilt on that point on which he himself had shown peculiar virtue. In P. vii, 64, Bromyard represents it not as a lawsuit but as a gamble, in which of course the devil has every chance on his side.

<sup>3</sup> Berthold of Regensburg, *Predigten*, II, 17.

<sup>4</sup> *Tableau*, p. 70.

needed in affairs of this kind, he appeared on the fourth Sabbath, which was held on the night of the 24th. All the witches and warlocks, rejoicing at his appearance, asked him where he had been so long away, without seeing them or appearing at the assizes. Whereunto he answered that he had just been pleading their cause against the Saviour (whom he blasphemously called *Janicot*, which is as much as to say, *Little-John*) and that he had gained his cause against Christ and was assured that they would not be burned.

Moreover, just as legal theories crept into medieval demonology, so did demonology creep into the law-courts. I have quoted elsewhere the verdict of a Northumberland jury in 1279; a man speared an old woman whom he accused of bewitching him, and was held to have acted "in self defence, as against the devil." This, and an almost equally interesting typical case of about the same date, may be found in appendix 6. If the old heathen beliefs died so hard, it was precisely because they coincided at so many points with popular orthodoxy, and especially with a demonology which practically turned Christianity into a dualistic religion.

■

## CHAPTER V

### HELL AND PURGATORY

SUCH, then, was the devil; and it was only too easy to go to him; that is a thought which meets us everywhere. Of the many medieval poems which anticipated Villon's *Ballad of Fair Ladies*, one of the best is that printed by Furnivall (E.E.T.S. vol. 115, pp. 761 ff.). To Villon, the pathos is simply in their disappearance—"But where are the snows of yester-year." To the English poet of the thirteenth century, there is horror as well as pathos; slender are the chances in the next world for those who have been great or rich or fair on this pleasant green earth:

Their paradise they nomen here,	[took
And now they lien in hell y-fere,	[all together
The fire it brenneth ever.	
Long is <i>aye</i> , and long is <i>o</i>	[always
Long is <i>way</i> ! and long is woe!	[alas!
Thence ne cometh they never.	

To Henry of Huntingdon the princely glory of young William, the future victim of the White Ship, told its own tale: "my soul used to whisper to me 'this boy, so delicate as he is, is being nourished as food for hell-fire.'" (R.S. 1879, p. 304.)

Ordericus Vitalis tells us of a parish priest's vision in 1091, as he came home one winter night from a sick-bed in a distant corner of his parish. He heard the tramp as of a mighty army, and thought it must be the terrible Robert of Bellême marching to the siege of a neighbouring castle. Presently they came into the moonlight; a giant figure came forward and bade the priest stay where he stood; and the ghostly army defiled past him—laden with plunder, like an army of living men, but with plunder which burned into their flesh. The priest saw well-known figures escorted by demon-tormentors; "the murderer of Stephen the priest"; throngs of noble ladies on horseback or in litters; priests and monks and prelates and judges; finally, a vast host of knights and men at arms; a whole damned world, as numerous

and as stately as the present world of the living, and bound up only too closely with that present:

For he reported that he had seen many folk of great repute, whom man's esteem had already reckoned among the saints in heaven; to wit, Hugh Bishop of Lisieux, and great abbots such as Maynard of St Evroul and Gerbert of St Wandrille, and many others whose names I forget and will not strive to record; for man's eye is oftentimes deceived, but God seeth to the very marrow.

Berthold of Regensburg is more moderate than most medieval theologians when he puts the proportion of damned to saved as five to one<sup>1</sup>. Here, at least, medieval theology could appeal to the letter of the Gospel.

The crude dualism of popular Christianity, while owing much to heathen survivals, could yet shelter itself easily behind certain biblical texts. It was from the New Testament that Augustine's exegesis, pitilessly and anachronistically literal, insisted upon the mathematical accuracy of that word *eternal*; and he and his fellows laid almost equal emphasis on that sentence which added terror to terror: "Many are called, but few are chosen"<sup>2</sup>. The only men who dare to soften these horrible implications, in the Middle Ages or beyond, are either heretics or men of doubtful orthodoxy like John the Scot<sup>3</sup>. Equally rare are those who combat, however moderately, the almost universal belief that not only all adherents of non-Christian religions but all unbaptized children of Christian parents are doomed to an eternal loss which must have wrung every mother's soul<sup>4</sup>.

Here, as we have seen, was the crudest of contrasts and the

<sup>1</sup> *Predigten*, II, 170: he compares them to the ten revolted tribes of Israel and the two faithful. On the preceding page he compares the Devil to the owner of a vineyard, who picks the biggest clusters for his own table and troubles less about the rest. See also appendix 2C.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2C.

<sup>3</sup> That is, the only men of letters whose works have come down to us. But we must not assume, because there were so few articulate protests, that there was not a great deal of inarticulate and subconscious revolt against these horrors. Mr A. S. Turberville aptly quotes from the deposition of a witness against a thirteenth century heretic (Douais, *Documents*, II, 100): "Moreover the said Peter was heard to say that, if he could lay hold upon that God who saved one out of a thousand creatures of his own hands, and damned the rest, he would tear and rend him with tooth and nail as a traitor, and would hold him for a false traitor and spit in his face." The belief in the final salvation of all men was a distinctive Albigensian tenet.

<sup>4</sup> See appendix 2B.

most terrible of all imaginable alternatives. Nothing in this life can be comparable in importance to the question: Shall I go to heaven, or to hell? And the militant spirit in which Christianity emerged from its persecutions tempted the orthodox to narrow still further the gate of eternal life. It was hard enough to do the things that Christ prescribed, but harder still to avoid other pitfalls which Christians had made for each other. Even before the Council of Nicaea, it is calculated that Christianity had split into ninety different sects, all of which were condemned by the majority as heresies; and heresy was a passport to far worse torments than were incurred by the mere lack of baptism. One of the earliest monastic stories to this effect, dating from the fifth century, was repeated for the edification of orthodox readers even down to the end of the sixteenth<sup>1</sup>. The monk Theophanes, attracted by the spiritual reputation of an aged monk of Palestine named Cyriacus, made a pilgrimage to consult him for a remedy against thoughts of fornication. It transpired that the visitor lived among Nestorians; and from thenceforth all other questions fell into the background.

Cyriac, hearing this name of Nestorius, was afflicted at the thought of his brother's damnation, and rebuked him, beseeching that he would depart from this abominable and fatal heresy and cleave unto the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, saying that there was no hope of salvation for such as held not the truth that Saint Mary is the Mother of God. Then said Theophanes: "Nay, reverend father, but all heresies say the same, that we must be of their party or we can by no means come to salvation. Wherefore, wretch that I am, what can I do? do thou pray unto the Lord that he will certify me of the true faith." At these words the old man rejoiced, saying: "Sit thou in my cave, and put all thy hope in God, that His lovingkindness will reveal unto thee which is the true faith." Then, leaving Theophanes in his cave, he went out to the shores of the Dead Sea to pray for him unto God. So it came to pass on the morrow, about noontide, that Theophanes saw a man of horrid aspect standing by him, who said, "Come now and see the truth." Then taking him by the hand, the stranger led him to a place of darkness and stench, belching forth continual flames, wherein he saw Nestorius,

<sup>1</sup> It is in *Vitaspatrum*, lib. x, c. 26 (P.L. 74, col. 131) and is reprinted by the editor of Peter the Venerable's *Liber Miraculorum* (Douai, 1595, fol. 160 b). The story had passed, at an intermediate stage, through a collection of Dominican miracles.

Eutyches, Apollinaris, Dioscurus, Severus, Arius, Origen, and certain others. Then said his visitor, "This is the place prepared for heretics and blasphemers, and for all that follow after their doctrines. If this place be to thy liking, persist in thy belief; but, if thou art unwilling to suffer this torment, join thyself unto that Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church whereof the old man teacheth thee. For I say unto thee that, even though a man practise every virtue, yet, if he believe not rightly, he shall be tormented in this place." With this, the brother came to himself again, and told unto the old man, on his return, all that he had seen; after which he came unto the communion of the Holy Catholic Church. He dwelt thenceforward with the old man, and, after four years, he slept in peace.

There is a similar story in the same collection; and this belief lent itself conveniently to occasions where the rancour was almost more political than religious. St Gregory's story of Theodoric the Great plunged into the Lipari volcano, and the Franciscan legend damning Frederick II and his knights to the flaming jaws of Etna, are too well-known to need more than a passing mention here. It was a commonplace that volcanoes were mouths of hell; and older pagan superstitions fed the same flame of fear. "To go West" expresses an ancient belief, older than Christianity. "Wherefore is the sun red at even? For he goeth toward Hell"; so runs *The Master of Oxenforde's Catechism*, of the early fifteenth century<sup>1</sup>. Bromyard writes:

Just as the lion, in the fable, pretended to be dead that he might catch his prey the easier, so the devil, that he may deceive the more, doth suggest to many men that he is as it were dead; at least so far that he will not torment them for ever, and that hell-fire is burned out, so that it will not hold its prey for ever; and he hath many heralds to publish this news and to invite others to the jaws of hell; and many enter under this pretext [quotations from Matt. vii, 13; Wisdom ii, 1]. Truly, in this matter, we should trust more to our own eyes than to such lies; for it is well known that hell-fire may be seen. For, (as St Gregory sheweth in his 4th Dialogue against such as deny that there is a hell) the flame of hell is visibly belched forth in certain places in Sicily; and Augustine, in the last chapter of the 3rd book of his *City of God*, saith that so great a cloud of ashes brake forth once from Mount Etna as to cover the house roofs with fire that ran down and melted the rocks<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Reliquiae Antiquae*, i, 232.

<sup>2</sup> *Sum. Praed.* P. viii, 24; cf. Caes. Heist. dist. xii, cc. 7-13; Petrus Berchorius, *Repertorium Morale*, s.v. *Olla*, c. (ed. Cologne, 1731, v, 159) and

But, like all exaggerations, these doctrines constantly failed of their effect; they proved too much. When Gregory the Great pleads the necessity of telling these grisly stories in the face of those "many men, within the lap of Holy Church," who "doubt of the soul's life when the body is dead," we are naturally reminded that he lived in a society as yet imperfectly Christianized. But his emphasis tells its own tale; he is certain that the Last Judgement is close at hand; he hears that Etna is growing in intensity and opening her fiery jaws wider from day to day,

in order that, as the end of the world draweth nigh, the more men are certainly gathered to be burned there, the more openly these places of torment may be seen to gape. Which God Almighty hath vouchsafed to show for the reprehension of those who live in this world, in order that those faithless minds which believe not in the tortures of hell may see with their own eyes those places of torment which their ears refuse to credit<sup>1</sup>.

But we find similar reasons urged at least as late as 1200 A.D., in London, by a prior of Holy Trinity: there are "many who consider only what they see, believing neither in good nor in evil angels, nor in life after death, nor in any other spiritual and invisible things": hence the good prior compiles a book of marvellous Revelations to confute such sceptics<sup>2</sup>. Two generations later, the author of the *Speculum Morale* complains that

the *Speculum Morale* fathered upon Vincent of Beauvais, ed. 1624, col. 739. In our own days, Mgr de Ségur, whom a brief of Pope Pius IX in 1876 lauded as "a herald of the Gospel," undertook to prove that hell was in the centre of the earth, adding at the end of an elaborate argument that "the moderate amount of fire which escapes from the mouths of the volcanoes fully confirms this assertion" (*L'Enfer*, p. 87, quoted in J. Baissac, *Le Diable*, 1, 72). A Catholic author writes in *The Contemporary Review*, vol. 66 (1894), p. 353: "A couple of years ago a humane gentleman in Northern Italy, not daring to dream of anything approaching to happiness in the dreary abode of the damned, merely declared his disbelief in the material fire of hell. But punishment followed the sin with lightning-like rapidity. He was denied absolution and communion by the priest, and had he died in that state must have had his doubts removed by the most terrible personal experience. A clergyman might, of course, be mistaken. But the matter was referred to the highest ecclesiastical court, and the Holy Inquisition, presided over by Pope Leo XIII, issued a decree confirming the priest's decision, and punishing disbelief in the material fire of hell by deprivation of the Sacraments."

<sup>1</sup> *Dialogus*, bk III, ch. 38; IV, 36.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Lambeth 51; I print two translations from this book in *Social Life in Britain*, pp. 218 ff.



there are many who laugh at such visions [of the next world]... and no wonder that such things are disbelieved by men who believe in no hell or who, if they confess its existence with their lips, yet show by their deeds that they have neither faith nor fear, and perchance would even say the same openly if they dared<sup>1</sup>.

Two centuries later again, Comines remarks (as so many have had occasion to note after him) that a universal and business-like belief in hell would change the face of the world:

If [men] had firm faith, and believed those things which God and Holy Church command us under pain of damnation, knowing their days to be so short and the pains of hell so horrible, without any end or remission for the damned, then they would not do as they do... Great folk do not know themselves, nor believe that there is a God<sup>2</sup>.

There was, in fact, at all times a strong undercurrent of revolt against this doctrine of original sin and hell, of which I have already made mention<sup>3</sup>. St Augustine's and St Gregory's objectors wondered how it could be just that a finite guilt should be punished with an infinity of pain<sup>4</sup>. Docile souls in the Middle Ages accepted answers to that question which the most orthodox of today would scarcely approve; St Bonaventura actually contends that the damned have merited even more pain than they suffer in fact<sup>5</sup>. But there were indocile souls also; there was a minority who disbelieved explicitly, and a majority whose opposition was mainly the opposition of inertia; and the crescendo of pious exaggeration shows that hell-terrors had a tendency to wear dull among the multitude. Just as Berthold of Regensburg shows us open sceptics arguing that hell-fire must, in process of time, calcine the soul to a passive state in which it will no longer suffer, so also we can see that the general mind tended to grow callous from excessive friction upon that one spot<sup>6</sup>. In the middle of the fourteenth century, Meffret tells

<sup>1</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, ed. 1624, col. 840.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, ed. Buchon, pp. 134 b, 138 a (bk v, ch. 19, 20).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. appendixes 2D and 4.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory I, *Dialogus*, bk iv, ch. 44.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. Quaracchi, iv, 959 b (*Sent.* lib. iv, dist. xlvii, art. 1, quaest. 2).

<sup>6</sup> *Predigten*, ed. Pfeiffer, I, 386: "Some folk say: 'He who is used to hell, is as comfortable there as anywhere else.' That is a great lie; for no man may grow used to hell. Master Cain was the first that ever went down to hell; the torment and the fire burn him today even as they burned him from the first." Cf. Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* Suppl. quaest. 86.

us how the laity of his time "fear not hell, nor care for it, but say: 'Unless the priests talked about hell, they would starve'"<sup>1</sup>. With the majority of layfolk, heaven and hell never became insistent and effectual realities until their deathbed. Few indeed can have been the mothers who gave more than lip-homage or superficial acquiescence to the doctrine of the unbaptized child; and this inevitable reaction of indifference or revolt goes far to explain the popularity of purgatory. Purgatory, to most minds, was simply old hell writ small. It was awful enough to maintain the old sanctions, yet mild enough to liberate the unwilling imagination from the intolerable horrors of eternal damnation. Those infernal nightmares stood always in the background as an ultimate sanction; but now the soul might just glance at them, and pass on to dwell upon the less awful pains of an intermediate state. Yet there, in the background, hell still gave more emphatic reality to purgatory, just as the modern mind can conceive somewhat more of earth and sun and moon in the light of those staggering statistics which astronomers give us concerning the stars that lie at the furthest limits of our ken<sup>2</sup>.

Then, however, the whole process began afresh. Familiarity with purgatory brought with it the natural danger of contempt; it was only too easy to say, consciously or sub-consciously, "I need not seriously consider the worst contingency; purgatory is my real practical problem; I will take my risk of purgatory with the rest: 'the chances are, I go where most men go.'" Therefore the rigorist must now make purgatory more severe, even as Christ had been made more severe in the past; and thus purgatory became all that hell had been, except for its final hope. A certain abbot, given to favouritism, procured the election of a nephew as his successor; "and when this nephew, after his election, was walking alone by the fountain in his garden, he heard a voice come from thence, as from his uncle lamenting miserably. The abbot adjured this spirit to tell his name; whereunto he made answer, 'I am thine uncle, who am burned here beyond all reckoning, for that I persuaded thy promotion

<sup>1</sup> *Fest.* p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> We must not forget, of course, Dante's far nobler conception of purgatory as a place where the soul is at one with its Creator's designs, and would not willingly escape one minute before the appointed time. Compare also St Catherine of Genoa as quoted by E. B. Pusey, *Healthful Reunion*, pp. 112ff.

through carnal affection.' 'Nay,' answered the other, 'but thou canst not be greatly afflicted in so temperate a fountain.' 'Go then and bring that copper candlestick from behind the altar, and cast it into this water.' The nephew obeyed; and forthwith the copper melted as wax in the fire, or as butter in a boiling pot. Then the abbot signed himself with the cross; and from that time forth he heard the voice no more." The *Speculum Morale* tells us this and many similar stories to emphasize the horror of purgatory<sup>1</sup>; moralists like Herolt repeat the tale with additions of their own. Herolt emphasizes the doctrine not only in a separate collection of anecdotes for preachers, but in his own sermons (e.g. *Serm.* 160 E). He quotes how a certain good friar, after his death, appeared to another brother and said: "I am much tortured [in purgatory], for that, when others watered their wine, I drank it pure in order that I might be able to sleep..." Another was seven days in purgatory for words of solace and for bodily recreation. "...A certain friar, in his death-agony, saw the blessed Virgin Mary; and, after his death, he appeared to another brother saying, 'I pray thee to bid the other brethren suffer no secular folk to come in to the deathbed of the brethren. For I am grievously punished for that, on my deathbed, I looked upon my secular kinsfolk and had carnal compassion with them as they wept.'" A monk, to whom a vision had been vouchsafed of the realities of purgatory, "whenever he saw some younger monk laughing immoderately or exceeding otherwise in levity, cried out saying, 'O! if thou knewest how bitter pains are due unto thee for these levities, thou wouldst perchance amend these light manners of thine'" (*Ex.* P. 90). He tells, again, how "a soul would rather do 100 years of hard penance here in the body, than burn in purgatory for a single day" (*Serm.* 140 R). "A certain priest said, 'If this lake were full of fire, then would I gladly be plunged therein until the end of the world, if so I could be certain of coming neither to purgatory nor to hell'" (*Serm.* 151 L). A condemned German criminal, who had many sins upon his conscience, besought his cousin to mitigate the impending pains of purgatory by exquisite torments in the present life: "Bring,

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Doct.* 1624, col. 739-40; it comes first, perhaps, in *Exord. Mag. Cist. dist.* v, c. 21.

I beseech thee, one of those iron-toothed heckles wherewith women heckle their flax; plough up my hands and arms to the shoulders, and my feet and legs and thighs; then my privy members and my ears and eyes, nose and lips; and then at last cut my head off... would that I could suffer twice or thrice such a torture as this, and more again!" Or again: "Albert the Great chose for himself to remain ten days in purgatory; and afterwards he appeared to a certain devout disciple, saying, 'I did foolishly in that I chose those ten days in purgatory; for I am in most grievous torture.' Wherefore Augustine saith, 'He who chooseth purgatory knoweth not what he asketh; for to dwell there but the twinkling of an eye is a more grievous torment than any that St Lawrence suffered on his gridiron'"<sup>1</sup>. One devout soul saw the churchyard thick-set with an infinity of clasped and suppliant hands—souls in purgatory that besought her prayers. A priest, who was wont to pray for the dead every time he passed through the cemetery, "when he came to the final *requiescant in pace*, heard clearly the voices of a vast multitude answering him with the word *Amen*"<sup>2</sup>. Such stories meet us everywhere; yet, here again, the effect wore off with repetition, and most men were far from acting upon this purgatorial theory as a practical reality<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, as before with hell, a further stimulus must be sought; and there grew up the strange legend and practice of St Patrick's Purgatory<sup>4</sup>. St Patrick was said to have prayed for this convincing manifestation as a weapon against doubters; he built a monastery on an island in Lough Derg; and there, in certain vaporous caverns, the monks certainly did undertake, for at least six centuries, to give visible and tangible proof of this intermediate state for souls. Chroniclers give a minute description of the knight Owen's descent in 1153; Caesarius of Heisterbach, a century later, celebrates it as a conclusive remedy against disbelief

<sup>1</sup> *Ex.* P. 81, 87; cf. 78, 128.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 95; *Exord. Mag. Cist.* dist. vi, c. 7; cf. 5. The same multitudinous soul-chorus came at Mass to a Franciscan of the second generation; Wadding, an. 1267, § 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Spec. Doct.* col. 745-8.

<sup>4</sup> The fullest details on this subject are collected in T. Wright's *St Patrick's Purgatory*, 1844. The classical medieval accounts are in Roger of Wendover and Matthew Paris under the year 1153, and by Froissart in his account of Sir William Lisle. Both accounts show its value as a remedy for disbelief.

(dist. XII, cc. 38-9). English kings gave safe-conducts to visit it, and testimonials to distinguished visitors; Froissart had actually spoken with a nobleman who had been through the ordeal. The financial abuses which it encouraged led to its formal abolition by Alexander VI, as an imposture, in 1497; but local customs of this kind could defy even the papal ban; so in 1522 we find it flourishing again, and even consecrated in the Roman missal. Abroad, its reputation spread more and more; Calderon celebrated it in Spain; in France, a book in its honour was duly licensed by the ecclesiastical authorities as late as 1742; a few years later, Pope Benedict XIV preached a sermon to the same effect; the medieval ceremonies, under different forms, were still kept up when Wright wrote in the middle of last century.

It is a dizzy story, but characteristically Irish and medieval. Our children will probably judge that we have erred greatly in over-simplifying the religious and social history of those times, and that many current generalizations contain quite as much falsehood as truth. When Clough and Matthew Arnold complain of the modern world as "souls bereaved," "light half-believers in our casual creeds," let us not forget that our forefathers suffered very similar incertitudes under different forms. "They blustered forth as beasts"; thus does Langland describe the blind spiritual gropings of his own age, where sincere enquirers stumbled onwards in a half-darkness, with scarcely even a half-faith in their official leaders<sup>1</sup>. It was like Virgil's underworld: *quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna Est iter in silvis. Aut videt aut vidisse putat*—we miss half the truth about these men, unless we qualify their *credo* with a *credidisse putabant*. The so-called Ages of Faith may be more truly called Ages of Acquiescence; at bottom, they waited quite as truly as we wait in this present century for some great stirring of the stagnant waters. The perpetual effort of adjusting theological ideals to popular beliefs, and high hopes to lower possibilities, was probably as laborious then as now. Even in matters of discipline, so much more manageable than questions of abstract dogma, the Church was continually distracted between tight-strained theories which risked bursting the bonds of obedience,

<sup>1</sup> B. v, 521.

and relaxations which would inevitably bring her to an inclined plane of indulgences and concessions. The history of the Sacrament of Penance affords very close parallels to this hell which needed softening into purgatory, and this purgatory which needed to be armed with most of the terrors of hell<sup>1</sup>.

And, the more conscious men were of failure, the more definitely they laid the blame upon the devil.

In the early sixteenth century, Benedict's own abbey of Monte Cassino was held *in commendam*—that is, was sucked dry by an absentee abbot—in the person of Cardinal Giovanni de' Medici, the future Leo X. Giovanni was persuaded, as a great favour, to renounce his rights over the monastic revenues in consideration of an annual pension of 4000 ducats, 500 bushels of corn and 1000 pounds of white wax. Even thus the monks could scarcely live decently; and a friend of Giovanni's who had now taken the cowl wrote to expostulate with him. He pleaded the past glories of Monte Cassino, and pointed out that its present degradation could only be explained in one way: its spiritual greatness had excited the special envy and the directest attacks of the devil, who was now for the time completely victorious. (G. Cortesii *Opera*, Padua, 1774, II, 15.)

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's review of Mr O. D. Watkins's *History of Penance* (1920) in *The Hibbert Journal* for July 1921.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SAFEGUARD OF THE COWL

HOWEVER much artificial stimulus these otherworldly beliefs might require among the generality of the faithful, the monk for his part was professionally bound to such tenets, and the really good monk was as true to his profession on this point as on others. To such a man, Comines's complaint, did not apply. The knight who, in full vigour, had quitted his lands and his honours for the cloister, or the great lawyer who had abandoned his quiddits and his quilllets, might well disdain to rob or cheat, even for the common good of the monastery<sup>1</sup>. Such a man felt that his whole life was a challenge to the devil, as his very cloister was a trespass upon the devil's domain<sup>2</sup>. His vow of retreat had saved his soul: like Jerome, he might look back now upon the horrors of the world, and say "my soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler"<sup>3</sup>; but only on condition that he took his vow seriously. As St Jerome again wrote, and as disciplinarians repeated all down the Middle Ages, *monachus non docentis sed plangentis habet officium*; we are here in the cloister to eat our own and others' sins. When a distinguished modern Benedictine claims that visible joy, and even laughter, are part of the monastic ideal, he gives no medieval evidence, but simply falls back upon three modern writers; yet in the same breath he accuses the Reformation of having brought sadness into religion<sup>4</sup>. The medieval monk knew none of these

<sup>1</sup> Vitry, pp. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Vitaspatrum*, P.L. vol. 73, col. 133: when St Antony took up his abode in the wilderness, "voices were heard as of a crowd of people, and a tumult as of men crying 'Wherefore dost thou encroach upon our dwelling-places? What hast thou to do with this desert? Depart from these alien tracts; thou canst not dwell here and sustain our attacks...' Then they understood that devils were warring against Antony." When St Guthlac founded Croyland in the fens, fiends were heard lamenting: "Alas, now have we lost our might and our habitation" (Myrc, *Festial*, p. 240). St Peter Damian tells us how, when at last the brethren had decided to establish a fresh monastic colony, demons were heard wailing through the forest around (P.L. vol. 144, col. 1002 b). Cf. Roskoff, II, 155.

<sup>3</sup> *Ad Eustochium*; cf. Bernard, *Serm.* III, in *Psalm. Qui habitat*, §§ 1-4.

<sup>4</sup> Dom Germain Morin, *L'Idéal Monastique* (Paris, Beauchesne, pp. 195-9).

modern refinements: sitting beside the fire in the warming-house, watching the logs as they oozed and wept, he might well think of those words with which St Bernard converted his own father to the cloister: "Thou art like unto this trunk; for thou couldest not be burned with fire from heaven, nor weep for thy sins, nor sigh upwards to God; yet in hell, unless thou do penance, thou shalt burn for ever and weep and send forth smoke and stench"<sup>1</sup>. In this spirit, the stricter brethren laid special stress upon penitential rules of silence, and so interpreted the Benedictine precept of *taciturnitas* that they would scarce speak even when licence was given in parlour or warming-house. Carthusians and Cistercians, later on, laid special emphasis on silence; so did the stricter nuns; here, for instance, are the prescriptions of that Rule for Franciscan nuns which was drawn up by Gregory IX and amended by Innocent IV; it will be seen that it interprets the Benedictine prohibition in its strictest sense:

Let continuous silence be so continuously maintained by all, that they be permitted to speak neither to each other nor to any other person without leave; except those upon whom some supervision [*magisterium*] or work hath been enjoined which cannot be rightly exercised in silence. Let these be permitted to speak together of the things which pertain to their office or to their work, where and when and how the Abbess may think good. When any person, whether Religious or secular, or of any rank whatever, asks leave to speak to any of the nuns, let news be brought first to the Abbess; and, if she grant leave, let the nun go to the parlour with two others, at least, always by her side, that they may hear all that is said to her, or by her to that other. For let this be firmly kept by all, whether whole or sick, that they speak neither among themselves nor to others with less than three together; except (as aforesaid) those who are deputed to divers offices and works, and excepting those times when any nun shall speak privately either to the priest in confession or with the Visitor concerning the state of the community and the observance of regular discipline<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Etienne de Bourbon, *Anecdotes*, p. 28; cf. *Spec. Morale*, col. 829. Etienne heard this story himself from St Bernard's great-nephew, at the castle of Fontaine where the saint had been born.

<sup>2</sup> Wadding, an. 1219, § 47. For Benedictine monks, see St Benedict of Aniane's *Concordia Regularum*, P.L. vol. 103, col. 823 and notes; also Martène's *Commentary*, index, s.v. *silentium*; and his *Voyage Littéraire* pp. 122, 124.



The thought of this as a pressing religious duty gave tenfold significance to those words of Isaiah: "In silence and in hope shall your strength be"<sup>1</sup>; words which the monk hailed as a direct blessing upon his daily self-control. Men went farther still to find scriptural consecration for this monastic rule of silence: "Our dear Lady, St Mary, who ought to be an example to all women, was of so little speech that we do not find anywhere in Holy Writ that she spake more than four times"<sup>2</sup>.

This puritanical distrust of human speech, which is so strong in monasticism from *Vitas patrum* down to Thomas à Kempis, was joined with a still greater prejudice against laughter<sup>3</sup>. In the same sentence in which Brother Leo speaks of St Francis's habitual cheerfulness, he assures us that the saint "did specially abhor laughter"<sup>4</sup>; we have similar evidence as to St Bernard; and, indeed, the avoidance of laughter is a commonplace among monastic disciplinarians<sup>5</sup>. Animal pets, again, are always dis-

<sup>1</sup> xxx, 15. Vulg.: *In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra*; the A.V. has "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."

<sup>2</sup> *Ancren Riwle* (C.S. 1853, p. 77); the author comes back to the same subject later on; and his whole § 2, "Of Speech," is characteristic. Herolt is more liberal; he notes that Mary spoke seven different times, but with four people only (*Serm.* xxxv).

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 7. One of the *praecepta communia* of Abbot Dorotheus runs: "If thou be compelled to laugh, let it not be so as to show thy teeth. If thou be compelled to meet women, turn away thy face from beholding them, and speak thus [with averted gaze]" (*De la Bigne, Bib. SS. Pat.* tom. II (Paris, 1589), col. 900).

<sup>4</sup> *Mirror of Perfection*, § 96. It is in sheer ignorance of medieval monastic documents that Father Cuthbert attempts to contrast his heroes with "the gloomy, laughter-lacking spirit of the sectary."

<sup>5</sup> Bernard admits, indeed, that laughter and speech are not essentially sinful in a monk unless they have been expressly forbidden by his superior (*De Praecepto*, c. 8, *ad init.*). But he repeats more than once that mourning is the monk's real business (e.g. Epp. 89, 365); again: "every mouthful that we eat should be watered with our tears" (Ep. 339). He goes out of his way, in his sermon on St Malachy, to praise him because he rarely laughed, even to display or to provoke charity. Moreover, he assigns some slight guilt of sin even to "a laughter rather wrung from us by a sudden gust than indulged in deliberately, contrary to commandment" (*De Praecepto*, c. viii). But perhaps the most definite evidence comes from the passage quoted from St Chrysostom in the *Flores Omnium Paene Doctorum* compiled about 1300 by Thomas Waldensis and Thomas Hibernicus (see D.N.B.). This runs: "Thou who professest to be a monk, and art crucified, and whose duty is to mourn, dost thou laugh? Tell me, when did Christ do so? Thou hast never heard of Christ laughing; but thou hast often read how He was sorrowful" (Article "Monachus," § v, ed. 1575, p. 576). It is the devil, says Richalm, who makes monks laugh (*l.c.* pp. 433 c, 437 c).

couraged or forbidden; the *Ancren Riwe* permits the ladies to have no beast but the harmless necessary cat; Franciscan statutes forbid tame animals or birds<sup>1</sup>; and even the genial Salimbene, who was anything but strait-laced, was disgusted at the "foul blemish" in certain prominent friars of his day who "love to play with a cat or a whelp or some small fowl, but not as the blessed Francis was wont to play with a pheasant and a cicada, rejoicing the while in the Lord"<sup>2</sup>.

But, here again, the strict rule bred reaction. Those sessions in the calefactory became a bugbear to disciplinarians; for, when the first fervour had cooled, taciturnity was hard to keep, and even outward silence did not always cover inward edification. There was a medieval proverb which ran:

When the rainē raineth, and the goosē winketh,  
Little thinketh the gander what the goosē thinketh.

In silence and in hope shall your strength be; but what if these austere silences should breed mere despair? Terrible inward struggles breathe from Othloh's autobiography, and from numerous briefer notices among the monastic records<sup>3</sup>. Gottschalk's hard doctrine of predestination was bred of such thoughts, silently ruminated from day to day, from year to year. As an oblate, he had found himself predestined to the cloister of Fulda by the same ineluctable fate by which a butterfly, hatched in some unfrequented church, is doomed to beat

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* General Chapter of Narbonne (1260): "Let no animal be kept, for any brother or any convent, . . . except cats and certain birds for the removal of unclean things." Cf. *Spec. Morale*, col. 832 d. The *Flores O.P.D.* goes so far as to connect beauty and damnation (p. 436, *Infernus*, § b, quoted as from Augustine).

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Holder-Egger, p. 146: cf. Bonaventura, *Legenda Major*, VIII, 9, 10. There are, of course, some beautiful stories of the love of saints for animals; the most that can be said on that side is collected in a little book by the Marquise de Rambures, *L'Eglise et la Pitié envers les Animaux*, 1903. But far more characteristic is the monk's frequent dislike of being disturbed by animals, as in the story complacently repeated by the later monk of St Albans from Matthew Paris's *Lives of the Abbots*: "Sigar, a monk of our abbey and a most holy hermit. . . by whose prayers the nightingales were driven away since they seemed to interrupt his prayers. This curse endureth even to the present day (c. 1440) even though the whole forest round has its nightingales, the place where Sigar dwelt has none." (*Amundesham R.S.* II, 303; *Gesta Abbatum*, I, 105.)

<sup>3</sup> I hope to publish considerable extracts from Othloh in my volume of illustrative documents.

its life out against the glass. In 829, the youth appealed to a synod at Mainz; how could a father's arbitrary will doom him, the freeborn son of a Saxon noble, even before the years of discretion, to a lifelong monkish vocation? The synod released him from this vicarious vow; but his abbot, Rabanus Maurus, one of the most eminent scholars of that age, had no difficulty in proving that the oblate system was genuinely Benedictine, and that Gottschalk was legally bound by what his father had vowed for him as a child<sup>1</sup>. The Emperor, Louis the Pious, decided for Raban against the synod; and Gottschalk's only relief was that he was permitted to exchange Fulda for the more congenial abbey of Orbais in France. But Raban never lost sight of him, nor did Hincmar, archbishop of Reims, distinguished equally as a writer and as a church politician. From this time forward, if not from the first, there was something of the caged tiger in Gottschalk; we need not make more than the evident allowance for unfriendly exaggeration when we find Hincmar describing him as a wild beast at heart under his monastic habit, crazy and furious in mind, violent in language and impatient of correction, with a small following of younger brethren who were fascinated by his singularity and his vehemence, and were willing to break the Rule by carrying letters for him, or even by leaving the monastery to bear his petition to the pope<sup>2</sup>. In his later and more rigorous imprisonment at the abbey of Hautvillers he grew wilder still:

Whatsoever the brethren have in food and drink, thereof they minister to him daily without negligence; he is given raiment in sufficiency, if he will take it; a sufficiency of wood is given him for his fire; there is a fireplace and a privy in the building where he is lodged. Washing is not denied unto him; but, since he came therein, he hath refused to wash not only his body but even his hands and face... At first, he would fain have gone as Adam went before his sin; but, when the cold began to constrain him, then he was fain to seek not only garments, but a cloak of skins and a fire to boot.

The persecuted Gottschalk, adds Hincmar, dreamed it was revealed to him that Hincmar should die, and that he himself

<sup>1</sup> See Raban's treatise *De oblatione Puerorum secundum Regulam Benedicti*.

<sup>2</sup> L. Traube in *MGH. Poetae*, III, 707 ff.; Friedrich in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, IX, 493 ff.; R. L. Poole, *Illust. of the Hist. of Med. Thought and Learning* (1920), pp. 44 ff.

should succeed him in the see of Reims, should be poisoned by his enemies, and should thus win the martyr's crown. He had learned to write Latin poetry in his youth; some of his effusions are ordinary hymns enough; but one, at least, seems to date from his earlier and less rigorous confinement, and has a haunting pathos of sound and sense:

Ut quid jubes,	pusiole,
quare mandas,	filiole,
carmen dulce	me cantare,
cum sim longe	exul valde
	intra mare?
	o cur jubes canere?

And the same refrain runs through the first six stanzas—*o cur jubes canere?* Could Israel sing the Lord's song in a strange land? Gottschalk's exile, God knows! has now endured close on two years. But he cannot refuse his boy-friend; and there is one song which befits even this prison; "then let us two here join our voices to praise God the Three in One. O God! if it be Thy will, have pity on me now at last!" Yet, meanwhile,

Interim cum	pusione
psallam ore,	psallam mente,
psallam voce,	psallam corde,
psallam die,	psallam nocte
	carmen dulce
	tibi, rex piissime <sup>1</sup> .

With all this, he so far justified his adversaries that he showed the narrowness of a monomaniac. He was totally wrapped up in St Augustine—*Augustinus noster*—and revelled in the hardest sayings of that fiery saint. The iron of constraint and repression had entered into his soul; more and more his reading and meditation had concentrated themselves upon this greatest of the Latin fathers; and the bitterness of his mind assimilated all the bitter things that he there found scattered up and down. His two Confessions of Faith show something of Augustine's passionate nature; and, strictly speaking, he went nowhere beyond Augustine, who himself, in controversy, had been driven to some such extremes as later writers associate mainly with the

<sup>1</sup> Traube, *l.c.* 731; M. R. James in *Camb. Med. Hist.* III, 529.

name of Calvin. Yet Gottschalk did falsify Augustine by his exclusive emphasis upon that one side; his denial of free-will did logically render the sacramental system superfluous; that is enough to account both for his condemnation and for his attitude under the sentence. Hincmar wrote to the dying Gottschalk that, if he would recant, he should be absolved and restored to the participation of Christ's Body and Blood. The exhortation provoked from the prisoner a furious refusal; to the very last, the brethren by his bedside pressed him in vain to recant; "and thus," adds Hincmar, "he ended in a way worthy of his unworthy life, and went unto his own place." For, to Gottschalk, this ultra-Augustinian Predestination spelt triumph. An iron fate had cut him off from freedom in this life; but the same fate had sealed him to glory in the next; and he probably looked upon his gaolers and opponents as no less strictly predestined to other things: the last shall be first, and the first last<sup>1</sup>.

But the brooding Religious did not always reach this more comforting solution; Bunyan himself did not ponder more over his own possible reprobation than many medieval cloisterers did. Brother Giles, the great Franciscan mystic, was only a type of many others when he was wont to say at evening, retiring to the solitude of his cell: "now I await my martyrdom"<sup>2</sup>. Madness and suicide meet us commonly in monastic annals<sup>3</sup>. And those who brooded over predestination might take a very different turn from that of brother Giles; a turn which transpires from a Franciscan record which Wadding has preserved under the year 1289 (§ 42). A young Franciscan, having picked up a crude deterministic doctrine in the Schools, was wont to argue: "Therefore I labour in vain under this heavy burthen of Religion; nor will all these watchings avail me one jot, nor whatsoever our superiors enjoin upon me—abstinence, mortification of the body and so forth—if in God's prescience I be destined to eternal

<sup>1</sup> On one occasion, when he had left Orbais without leave and traversed Italy on a preaching tour, he found hearty approval among the multitude. As C. v. Noorden points out, such predestinarian doctrines are always popular among revivalist congregations; on the surface, they are comforting and attractive, since the average hearer easily flatters himself with hopes of his own luck and his adversaries' misfortune, and easily puts the darker alternative aside. (*Hincmar*, 1863, p. 58.)

<sup>2</sup> *Ana. Fra.* III, 112.

<sup>3</sup> *E.g.* in *Caes. of Heisterbach*.

torments. If, on the other hand, He have determined to save me, then it will do no harm if I change this hard life for an easier, and indulge my body for a while." The arguments by which he was restrained from apostasy by the blessed Pietro Pettinaio, (who had talked with the Virgin Mary face to face, and had restored a dead boy to life,) are scarcely calculated to weaken the impression produced in the modern mind by the young friar's doubts<sup>1</sup>. Monastic chronicles supply numerous examples of equally painful perplexities, haunting the long hours of silence, meditation, or prayer.

The vulgar monk was vulgarly and undisguisedly bored. One precious ray of light comes here from the little book which Luigi Barbo, a Benedictine of noble family who became bishop of Treviso, wrote concerning that great reform of St Justina at Padua of which he himself had been the prime mover<sup>2</sup>. In describing the miraculous conversion of a recalcitrant monk who had long lagged behind the rest in this new way of salvation, Luigi writes:

He was so rude of intellect and so ignorant that he could scarce, in a whole day, learn by heart a single verse of a psalm. . . . Frequently in summer, when he was with the other brethren at reading in the Chapter-house before Compline, the only wearied brother of the convent, he often lifted his frock shamelessly up to his very knees, and crossed his legs over each other, and, looking from side to side, did so blow for weariness of spirit that all would hear him; so that (albeit by the Rule he was forbidden to express it in words) he showed to all present by the sound of his puffing lungs how sick he was with weariness.

"But this one," adds Luigi, "was the sole reproach in Israel"; and even he was converted when the plague came, and he narrowly escaped with his life.

To mitigate this severity of silence, monks invented or elaborated a system of conversation by signs; such signs at meal-times are already prescribed in the Rule. Many of a far more elaborate character are specially authorized by monastic disciplinarians; the Cluniac code was printed by Martène and is in the 149th volume of Migne's *Patrologia*; its daughter the Hirschau code is accessible in the original Latin and in a sum-

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 8.

<sup>2</sup> Pez, *Thesaurus*, II, iii, col. 292.

mary by Cless; the Syon code has been printed by Aungier<sup>1</sup>. When Giraldus Cambrensis dined with the monks of Canterbury somewhere about 1180, he found the monks

so profuse in their gesticulations of fingers and hands and arms, and in the whisperings whereby they avoided open speech (wherein all showed a most unedifying levity and licence) that Gerald felt as if he were sitting at a stage-play or among a company of actors and buffoons; for it would be more appropriate to their Order and to their honourable estate to speak modestly in plain human speech than to use such a dumb garrulity of frivolous signs and hissings<sup>2</sup>.

At about the same date, the monk of Eynsham saw monks suffering grievously in purgatory for idle speech or laughter or superfluous signs:

for immoderate laughings they had beatings; for idle speech, strokes in their face; and for vain thoughts they suffered grievous and variant troubleness of the ears [or eyes?]. And they that offended in dissolution of gesture and behaving were bound with sharp bonds, and many with fiery bonds; and for superfluity of signs, by the which they had together lewd plays and idle games, some of them had their fingers flayed and some had them by knocking sore bruised... Also they that spake words of ribaldry the which sounded uncleanness, or otherwise against the honesty of religion, were punished there almost as sore as for deadly sins<sup>3</sup>.

What he and others tried to check by fear, others sought to reform by ridicule; Cardinal Jacques de Vitry tells in one of his sermons how a woman and her husband quarrelled as to whether a meadow had been cut with the scythe or with the shears; how the man, in his rage, at last cut her tongue out;

yet she went on expressing, by the movements of her fingers, that it had been sheared and not mown, bickering with her fingers when she could no longer do so with her tongue. So do some monks when they are commanded to keep silence.

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 150, col. 940 ff.; Cless, II, i, 41; E. Martène, *De Ant. Mon. Rit.* I, IV, c. 18; see also my appendix 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Opera*, R.S. I, 51. How little this is exaggerated, we may see from the friendly boast of the biographer of St Odo of Cluny, that among the monks of that great house, in the tenth century, "that system had so grown that, even though they had lost the use of their tongues, I believe their signs would suffice for all necessary speech." (AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. v, 162.)

<sup>3</sup> *Revelation to the Monk of Evesham (sic)*, ed. Arber, p. 73. For a full account of this remarkable book see H. E. Salter, *Eynsham Cartulary*, II, 257 ff.

And again:

I have heard of some monks that, when they had been enjoined to keep silence, and even manual signs had been forbidden them (seeing that they were wont by such signs to tell vain and curious things to their fellows) no longer daring to use any other means, they would converse together with their toes, thus communicating to their fellows the battles of kings and the deeds of warriors and almost all the news and tidings of this world (*Exempla*, pp. 19, 92).

Nothing, indeed, could altogether repress this perverted garrulity; nor were the disciplinarians ever able to prevent a great deal of actual downright lip-talking, outside the short intervals and the narrow purlieus where such talk was permitted. There is a most illuminating sentence to this effect in the Abingdon customary, that book which paints such engaging pictures of what the ideal monastic officer should be. The prior is warned to be on his guard when he comes into the parlour; for

some monks assert that they have leave to talk when no leave at all has been given: wherefore it hath been ordained by the counsel of wise men that, if any man be accustomed to make a sign signifying that he hath licence to talk, he may justly be accused in Chapter. For many lie falsely [*mentiuntur mendaciis*] to escape from punishment (p. 361).

Let us be merciful to these liars; for it is to them, or to those who, without lying, obtained unbenedictine licence of speech, that we owe most of what is valuable in the monastic chronicles. The interest in, and discussion of, outside affairs, which alone made those priceless records possible, was opposed not only to the strict spirit of their Rule but to the explicit prescriptions of their disciplinary writers. Here, again, even the friars were obliged, in spite of their earlier freedom, to imitate the discipline of the older Orders; frequent statutes forbid their interfering in family matters, or picking up and reporting news of worldly affairs, however important. The beneficent friar of Shakespeare—the professional friend of the family—is a friar whom the disciplinarians of earlier days would have rebuked. If the *Mirror of Monks* pronounces a word of great austerity, “the Monk must be like Melchizedek, without father or mother or kindred,” it is a good Franciscan who goes even one degree farther: the friar, except so far as the hope of spiritual profit may arouse



quite another interest, is to look upon secular folk with no more interest "than if they were so many sheep"<sup>1</sup>. If good monks sometimes wrote chronicles full of detail as to the extra-monastic activities of their own day, or if good friars became helpful friends and counsellors in the ordinary daily difficulties of family life, this was rather contrary to, than consonant with, their professed religious ideal. The books representing that ideal (and these are very numerous) picture the Religious rather as saving his own soul, and, incidentally, helping an evil world, by his continual round of mortification, Masses and psalmody. The "Service of God" *par excellence*, to which no other of his daily duties is to be preferred, is that of the choir and altar; and this service, with his daily ascetic practices, even as it is performed under God's eye, so also is it done under perpetual siege by the devil. Demons register his laughter and his idle or superfluous words: they gather up with special glee the syllables which he drops or mutilates in his psalmody; one devil, named Tutivillius or Titivillus, is specially deputed to collect the fragments which drop from dangling, leaping, galloping, dragging, mumbling, fore-skipping, fore-running and overleaping monks<sup>2</sup>. This was the necessary reaction, in common minds, from a formalism which was itself a necessary part of St Benedict's disciplinary ideal. Protests against exaggerated formalism are common enough; none is more vigorous than that of the *Ancren Riwle* (ed. Morton, p. 9):

If any ignorant person ask you what Order you are, as you tell me some do, who strain at the gnat and swallow the fly [*sic*], answer and say that ye are of the Order of St James, who was God's apostle, and for his great holiness was called God's brother....He saith what Religion is, and what right Order...."Pure religion and without stain is to visit and assist widows and fatherless children,

<sup>1</sup> David of Augsburg, *De Exterioris et Interioris hominis Compositione* (Quaracchi, 1899), pp. 46, 48.

<sup>2</sup> Hi sunt qui psalmos corrumpunt nequiter almos:  
Dangler, cum gasper, lepar, galper, quoque draggar,  
Momeler, forskypper, forereyenner, sic et overleper.

*Reliquiae Antiquae*, I, 291.

Cf. p. 257: also T. Wright, *Latin Poems ascribed to W. Mapes*, p. 148. Two visions recording how monks and clergy are punished for the syllables they slur or omit are given in *Spec. Morale*, lib. III, pars vi, dist. 10. The devil collects these into sacks; and "a vast multitude" of clerical sinners go about in the next world with these bales of liturgical offal bound about their necks.

and to keep himself pure and unspotted from the world."... Thus the Apostle St James describes Religion and Order... herein is Religion, and not in the wide hood, nor in the black, nor in the white, nor in the grey cowl.

But this was written for three ladies withdrawn from the world by a personal and spontaneous religious impulse, which needed comparatively little of organization of exterior forms. Formal monachism, in virtue of its very power and popularity, had formalized a great deal of heathenism also.

For it must be repeated that, as the monastic ideal materialized, so the devil materialized with it. Popular anthropomorphism, and the demonology of popular religion, were even exaggerated in the average monastery. A few monks, thus cut off from the world, attained to great heights of pure contemplation. The majority simply wove the current creed into their peculiar scheme of life, and it may almost be said that devilry was systematized as part of the monastic system. Among the sayings and stories of hell and its fiends which fill those hundred pages of the *Speculum Morale*, quite nine-tenths are by monks or concerning monks. Satan was employed to drive men into the cloister, and to keep cloisterers within the bounds of discipline. St Bernard, as we have seen, is said to have converted his father by setting open fire to a blasted oak-trunk, from which, amid flames and smouldering stench, he addressed the old man, singling him out amid the crowd, and warning him of the hell-risks of those who hang back from the cloister: "whereat his father was pricked to the heart, and followed his son and became a monk"<sup>1</sup>. Certainly even St Bernard, in spite of his width of view in many directions, had a very exaggerated notion of the difficulties of salvation outside the cloister<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, from every side of his character we may support that saying, *The Monk is the true Christian*, only adding this necessary qualification, *as conceived in the medieval mind*. Like General Booth, the true monk had imagination and logic enough to take in all seriousness things

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Moral.* lib. II, pars iii, dist. 4 (829 d). The anecdote is probably not true in that form; but this does not detract from its value as an illustration of monastic mentality; for Vincent's continuator was probably, like himself, a Dominican.

<sup>2</sup> It is only necessary to read the first two of his *Letters*, and his treatise *De Conversione*.

which others confessed with their lips and shrank from not only in practice but also in their logical consequences. And, while even Bernard so magnified his office, his brethren of commoner clay developed a superstitious and pharisaical worship of the cloister and the cowl. While Bernard said: "the Devil, terrible to men of the world, is contemptible to the monk," we must read into his words: "to the monk conscious of loyalty to his profession." We shall see later that no man was more pitiless than St Bernard to those who, by shirking their stricter claustral duties, were on their way to lose both this world and the next. But thousands of such monks existed; and these men believed unspiritually, as the saint believed spiritually, in the saving virtue of their profession. It is astounding how nakedly this doctrine of salvation through the cowl was often preached. It naturally began in the older Orders; the Cistercians, outvying these, were in turn outvied by the friars and later Religious, down to the Jesuits in comparatively modern times<sup>1</sup>. In the Middle Ages, a technical phrase grew up; men became monks and nuns *ad succurrendum*<sup>2</sup>. This meant that, in the last days of their life, and perhaps even at their latest gasp, they came into the monastery or were simply clad in the holy habit, in order that they might thus be found at the Last Judgement. Sometimes, convalescing, such postulants not only withdrew themselves but even tried to resume the gifts which always accompanied this surrender. In by far the greater number of cases, however, death sealed the compact at once. Ordericus Vitalis, who always tells us a great deal about the men and women round him, is full of stories of Religious *ad succurrendum*. The Praemonstratensian reform, contemporaneous with the Cistercian and even comparable to it in efficacy, brought literally hundreds to this broader way of salvation. The Obituary of Prémontré, for the first 250 years of that great abbey's existence, gives us more than 400 monks or nuns admitted *ad*

<sup>1</sup> See I. von Döllinger and H. Reusch, *Moralstreitigkeiten i. d. römisch-katholischen Kirche*, 1889, I, 524 ff. and II, 347. It was revealed to St Francis Borgia, who was General of the Jesuits 1565-72 and canonized in 1671, "that God hath a special favour unto this Society, and hath granted it the same grace as He granted of old to the Order of St Benedict; viz., that during its first three centuries no man will be damned who cleaves unto the Society of Jesus until his death." Döllinger shows how long this belief persisted.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 10.

*succurrendum*, out of about 4500 names altogether; in other words, nearly one out of ten were thus admitted. Before 1500, these records had entirely ceased; a significant fact. At the Abbaye du Parc, of the same Order, even greater numbers *ad succurrendum* are recorded; no less than 634<sup>1</sup>. We sometimes find the contracts by which well-to-do people ensured their final reception to these spiritual benefits. A charter of the abbey of Winchcombe, dating from about 1180, runs:

Know all men, present and future, that I Robert, clerk of Alne, have quit-claimed to the monastery of Winchcombe the land which I held at Medfurlong, to wit, 3½ acres, which are clearly of the Abbey demesne. Moreover, I have given to the said monks for ever, to the health of mine own soul and of that of Alice my wife and our ancestors, all my land at Alne between the two valleys, called Kendresled. In return for which donation the monks have granted me 20 shillings, and a monk's allowance of bread and beer such as are daily laid on the Refectory table, so often as I may come to Winchcombe on their business or mine own. Moreover, they have granted to receive me at my latter end as a monk *ad succurrendum*; and to Alice my wife they have granted her part in all good deeds which are done or shall be done in the convent of Winchcombe, and burial at her latter end if she desire it<sup>2</sup>.

Félibien, the historian of the abbey of St Denis, writes:

les nécrologes un peu anciens sont pleins de ces sortes de moines appelés improprement *monachi ad succurrendum*, puisqu'ils n'étaient pas pour donner secours aux autres, mais au contraire pour recevoir d'eux l'assistance de leurs prières et de leurs bonnes œuvres<sup>3</sup>.

Yet, though this orthodox Benedictine of the eighteenth century might speak critically of the practice, it would be difficult to quote a similar utterance from the golden age of monasticism. St Anselm wrote to the countess Matilda that he sympathized with her desire to retire from the world, while necessary business held her back, and added: "Yet this counsel I presume to give you, that if meanwhile (which God forbid!) you feel any certain and imminent peril of your life, you should give yourself up

<sup>1</sup> These two Obituaries were published at Louvain in 1913 and Brussels 1905-8 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Royce, *Landbok*, I, 210. Compare p. 213, where Nicholas of Bruere buys, for 10 marks, the fraternity of the house, the daily monastic allowance of food and drink, "and, at my latter end, the habit of St Benedict."

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. etc.*, p. 217.

wholly to God before quitting this life; for which purpose you should always secretly keep a [nun's] veil ready and at hand." (lib. iv, ep. 37.) Petrus Diaconus, writing about the same time in his *Chronicle of Monte Cassino*, tells a story still more significant of the monastic outlook<sup>1</sup>:

I deem it worthy to add, for the memory and edification of posterity, that which the Lord deigned to work this year through St Benedict in France. A certain man of that country, of great power and noble race, had become accursed from childhood upwards through such crimes that there was no part of his body which had not some vice of its own. When he came to die, he called together the brethren of a certain monastery and besought that the monastic habit should be granted unto him. Soon after he had put on these holy vestments he gave up the ghost; and the Lord vouchsafed to a certain servant of God, who dwelt hard by, a revelation of all that was done concerning this dead man's soul. No sooner was it parted from his body, than a terrible horde of demons bound it with burning chains and strove to drag it down into the flames of hell, when lo! our most blessed Father Benedict stood there among them with his pastoral staff in his hand. Then the fiends, seeing that they were losing their prey, cried, "O Benedict! thou knowest for how long a time thou hast stolen souls from our hands; but now thou doest against all justice if thou dost attempt to deprive us of this man who hath never done any good." To whom the Saint: "That I may be seen not to do you any chance injustice, do ye yourselves weigh his deeds; and if, from the time that he took my habit, he was in any way consenting unto your works, let him remain as your property"<sup>2</sup>. Then that congregation of the wicked, feeling itself reasonably conquered, vanished into thin air... Again, one Giovanni Benafrano, viscount to prince Jordan I, was a most wicked man, utterly polluted with every vice. When he came to death, he asked to be brought to this monastery [of Monte Cassino] and to be granted the habit of holy Religion. His friends listened to his petition and brought him hither; where, receiving the monastic cowl before the shrine of our most holy Father Benedict, he forthwith left this world. After his burial, a certain husbandman went forth from the monastery into the open country. When he had come under that mountain sanctuary of St Severus, who was once bishop of Cassino, he saw the devil standing in the way, tall of stature, with long fingers and enormous claws, holding a rod in his

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 173, col. 773: Peter has just mentioned the year 1123.

<sup>2</sup> It was a monastic commonplace that the taking of the vows and habit was a second baptism, cleansing from all past sin. See Jerome in P.L. vol. 22, col. 348; St Bernard, *Sermo de Diversis*, xi, 3; xxxvii, 3, and Martène, *Comment.* pp. 776-7.

hand and looking fiercely down upon him. This devil, having come up to the rustic, said, "Whence comest thou?" The other, taking him for a man, said, "From the convent of Monte Cassino." Then asked the devil, "What hath been done in the matter of viscount Giovanni?" "They made him a monk; and forthwith he died." The devil, hearing this, burst forth into lamentation: "Woe is me, Benedict! woe is me, Benedict! wherefore dost thou daily convert my servants unto thyself? wherefore dost thou still persecute me with such horrible cruelty?" Then, looking upon the rustic with flaming and furious face, he said, "Know for certain that, if thou hadst not eaten and drunken this day in Benedict's convent, and if thou hadst not in thy bosom, at this very hour, a loaf from that place, I would slay thee forthwith!" With these words he plunged down the mountain side, dragging trees and stones after him like a whirlwind<sup>1</sup>.

We have seen that this practice became far less common in the later Middle Ages; both to the monks and to the world it lost much of its earlier appeal. The monks had never, so far as our records show us, admitted the poor to any such privilege; no man could hope to take the frock on his deathbed unless he had something substantial to give for it. An early custom of Monte Cassino assumes that the child offered as an oblate will probably be of noble birth<sup>2</sup>; we may roughly assume the same, or something similar, of the monk *ad succurrendum*. But, long before the thirteenth century was out, nobles were less ready to give so much of their own to foundations which were now so richly endowed. Moreover, the general public now looked on the monks with different eyes; they had less implicit faith in this system; and the spread of education—which, however slow, was fairly steady—sapped their faith in what the practice contained of mere fetish-worship. Bromyard dilates more than once upon the subterfuges by which men hoped to escape at the last

<sup>1</sup> Clement V, in the bull *Romanus Pontifex*, granted remission of one-fourth part of all their sins to all who should be buried in the Franciscan frock (Wadding, an. 1313, § 22). Eugenius IV "granted to the Order very many other favours . . . that brethren who put off their frock to wash or patch it, or for convenience of fishing when necessity arose, should not thereby incur excommunication; especially if they did not cast it off or leave it in contempt, to join in dances or in other follies" (*ibid.* an. 1440). Cf. P.L. 166, col. 810 c.

<sup>2</sup> B. Albers, *Consuetudines Monasticae* (1907), III, 180. The formula which the monks have recorded for common use begins thus: "I [*name*], prince or count, in the name of God Almighty, do hand over this my son [*name*], before the abbot and the whole congregation of this holy place," etc., etc.

moment from hell; he gives many racy examples, of which two may suffice. Men who expect a death-bed repentance, he says, "are like those disorderly clerics, given up to secular business and cruelties and thefts, who in their whole lives... keep nothing of that which pertains to the clerical order, yet at last, when caught, in their fear of the gallows, they beg and claim to be saved by privilege of clergy... and, in hope of such escape, they have been doing evil more boldly in the past" (M. ix. 47). Again, "such sinners do with themselves as with their horses, whom, after they are broken down with tourneys and jousts and suchlike vanities and forbidden sports, they set at last to the cart; so also they think of themselves: 'In mine old age, after I am broken and wearied with vanities and sins and iniquities... then will I humble myself'" (P. vii. 69). Himself a Dominican, Bromyard would not naturally go out of his way to condemn specifically the abuse of the monastic habit; but he was not the man to shrink from plain speech where necessary. The Dominican author of the *Speculum Morale*, as will be seen later, was among the most plain-spoken critics of corpse-hunting by his brethren; and Bromyard's frequent and unsparingly direct references to the *ad succurrendum* system imply that it had the same vogue in Chaucer's day as in St Anselm's.

Here, and all through, it is important constantly to bear in mind the distinction between the real saints and the rank and file. What interests the social historian quite as much as the formal aim of these men is their practical performance. We must never forget what Clairvaux was—to this we shall come presently in detail—but we must look no less steadily at a side which has been too much neglected hitherto. We must revive in imagination not only Anselm's Bec and Bernard's Clairvaux and Francis's Portiuncula, but also the sort of monastery in which Anselm would have passed his life if, instead of seeking as a grown man from place to place until he had found the most living community of his age, he had been thrust as a boy into the nearest cloister that his father had found at hand. There, he would have found a very different world to the world of Bec. Newman and the early Tractarians, in taking men of exceptional goodness as types of these past ages, were quite as false to actual fact, though far more generous in their motives, than those

opposite-minded men who placard our walls with posters representing monastic *bons-vivants*. It is now universally recognized that the uncompromising idealism of Isaiah or Ezekiel is not typical of, but rather a conscious revolt against, the spirit of ordinary Hebrew society in their day, which was sordidly materialistic; similarly, much of that which so inspired Newman was written by medieval saints in revolt against actual medieval conditions. If my present enquiry were exclusively, or even mainly, concerned with such men as Anselm, Bernard, and Francis, then this chapter would be a mere caricature. But my point is, that the religion of the ordinary medieval soul was indeed a caricature of these men's faith. To St Bernard, the devil was a terrible and omnipresent reality; but God was an infinitely greater reality, *plures sunt nobiscum, quam cum illis*<sup>1</sup>. St Francis, again, recognized the devils as "God's sergeants," sent to discipline us for our own good. But, to the ordinary man, it may almost be said that the devil was a more insistent reality than God; and medieval religion, in so far as it differs from modern, was to an enormous extent the creation of the ordinary man; its distinctive doctrines had taken root among the multitude before they were legitimated by the hierarchy<sup>2</sup>. In all ages, the average soul is easily quieted; religious narcotics are cheap. But in all ages, again, there are souls with whom narcotics fail altogether; and an abortive narcotic is among the most fatal of mental irritants. Medieval records tell very much the same story of soul-struggle as we get from the seventeenth century: Bunyan might have drawn the very picture that bishop Odo of Cambrai draws in his treatise *On Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost*—the blasphemer beating his breast, sighing, groaning and weeping, yet unable to bring himself to real repentance that would set his soul at rest<sup>3</sup>. Of those students who form their

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 2, § 12.

<sup>2</sup> I have given four typical instances in *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. xxxii (2nd ed. p. 284). The Reformation, on its intellectual side, was mainly an attempt to purge away this dross; an attempt which was epoch-making in spite of all its obvious shortcomings. See H. M. Gwatkin, *Church and State in England to the Death of Q. Anne* (1917), pp. 149, 162 ff. I have dealt with the crazy perversions of medieval belief in ch. xxiv of the above-quoted book; a fuller account may be found in the three volumes of H. C. Lea's *Inquisition in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 130, col. 1115.



ideas from the original documents themselves, few will be found to contend that the average man or woman of the Middle Ages had come any nearer to solving the riddle of the universe than their average descendants of today; fewer still will decide that the thinking man, or the sensitive man, possessed his soul more quietly then than now. It is a monastic commonplace that the devil waits specially upon the elect; and, of all the elect, most of all upon the good monk.

For the men of that day saw the dualism of their religion as clearly, perhaps, as we do. Thinking minds knew how much heathenism still survived among the people; it was enough for the moment if this could be veneered with Christian forms. In the ballads, the condition of departed spirits is often fundamentally pagan, with a few ecclesiastical touches; Sweet William's Ghost must obey the cock-crow, because "the Psalms of Heaven will be sung, and ere now I'll be missed away." The Psalms themselves give room for that dualism; and we must remember how great a part they played in all services, above all in the monastic. So far as men were familiar with the actual text of the Bible, it was far more with the Psalms than with the New Testament; the religious man's inner life was above all in the Psalter. Each found there, to a great extent, what he brought; "I, the Lord, will answer him according to the multitude of his idols"; this is true down to the minutest shades of thought, good or bad. To some, the Psalms brought subjective quietism, and regular psalmody flowed evenly with the steady discipline of the convent. To others, these sacred chants were perpetually reminiscent of daily enmities and friction; their maledictions gave a vent to pent-up feelings; above all, the monk could freely use them against his spiritual adversaries; demons may be ubiquitous, but they shall be conquered now as in the past: "they compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns; for in the name of the Lord will I destroy them!" The very sound of the chant became part of a man's life, bench answering manfully to bench, while their breath rose in the frosty air of the midnight choir, and it became a small thing that there should be devils haunting the chill obscurity of that stone stair which led back to the dormitory, or besetting the dorter itself, where one faint lamp made the darkness

visible, or the still more pestilential chill of the rere-dorter beyond<sup>1</sup>.

But there is a ghostly enemy far more terrible than the black winter-devil; this is the *daemonium meridianum*, the mid-day demon of Ps. xc, 6, Vulg., where the Authorised Version has *the destruction that wasteth at noonday*; and here St Bernard is our typical authority. To Augustine, this noonday devil is the bloody demon of pagan persecution<sup>2</sup>. To Jerome, it is the Arian heresy: Arius suddenly started forth like the devil at noon-day<sup>3</sup>. To Cassian, it is already something more intimate; it is the spirit of *acedia*, that terrible weariness of self and of all things which haunts the cloister, "troubling the monk more especially about the midday hour, like an intermittent fever"<sup>4</sup>. Long before Bernard's time, the rôle of persecution was reversed; orthodoxy had nothing to fear from man; but now there lurks a still subtler and deeper horror in that verse; here is the devil who can appear as an angel of light, deceiving, if it were possible, even the elect; the devil whom Mary feared even under Gabriel's gracious words at the Annunciation<sup>5</sup>. To the medieval worshipper, and especially to the Religious, there was no revelation which might not become thus suspect; as the devil was the natural complement of their idea of God, so their conception of spiritual privileges opened this inevitable door to self-torture. A century after St Bernard, Hugues de St Cher interprets the

<sup>1</sup> Later monks, in spite of frequent Papal and visitatorial prohibitions, divided their dorters into separate cells or cubicles; we are here concerned with the earlier days before such relaxations had become avowed and systematic. For the terror of dormitory stairs and rere-dorter see Richalm, p. 462 b, and Guibert de Nogent in P.L. vol. 156, cols. 869 a, 890 d. It may be well to supply other devil-stories in Guibert; cols. 867 d, 868 b, 883 a, 883 d, 889 d, 904 d, 905 d, 906 b, 908 a, 957 d, 958 a. In this last case he appeared in the shape of a badger.

<sup>2</sup> *Enarr. in Psalm. xc*, § 8: "Wherefore of the noonday? Because of the intense heat of persecution... This devil of the noonday betokeneth the burning of vehement persecution."

<sup>3</sup> *Cont. Rufinum*, II, 17; P.L. vol. 23, col. 440; cf. *Anecdota Maredsoliana*, Série II, tom. I (1913), p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> *Inst. lib. x*, c. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *In Psalm. Qui habitat serm.* VI, § 6. "This is the demon, not only of the day, but even of the noonday. Was not this what Mary feared, when she was troubled at that new salutation of the Angel? Did not St Paul allude to this, when he said *we are not ignorant of his devices*? For even the angel of Satan transformeth himself into an angel of light." The *Exord. Mag. Cist.* speaks similarly of the *daemonium meridianum* in this sense.

*daemonium meridianum* in the same way, and adds that this difficulty of distinguishing between God's voice and Satan's "is wont to come after devout prayers and the shedding of [religious] tears"<sup>1</sup>.

The other books of special monastic study besides the Psalms—Cassian and *Vitaspatrum* and Gregory's *Dialogues*—were not calculated to allay these broodings and fears, or this intermittent sense of possible deception<sup>2</sup>. I have given a good many instances in *From St Francis to Dante* (1st ed. pp. 297, 342), and these could be multiplied almost indefinitely<sup>3</sup>. The diabolical delusions were most to be feared at the moment of death<sup>4</sup>. Humbert de Romans quotes from St Gregory that "the devil doth attack men more vehemently at their latter end, knowing that, if he conquer

<sup>1</sup> Vol. IV, 287, 3 (commenting on Ps. xc, 6). Abbot Butler had evidently forgotten St Bernard's remarkable sermon when he wrote of him and of St Gregory that "neither saint manifests any fear of his [the devil's] intrusion in the intimate personal relations of the soul with God" (*Bened. Monachism*, p. 91). It is equally misleading when he goes on to say that the characteristic of Benedictinism is "a mysticism purely spiritual, of a simplicity equal to its elevation. It is clean, being free from all taint of diabolism or any quasi-hypnotic symptoms; and safe for body, mind and soul alike, being unaccompanied by those psycho-physical concomitants of trance, stigmatization, visions, and revelations, so liable to illusion, and even at best so dubiously desirable, against which the greatest masters, as St John of the Cross, are always uttering warnings." Such statements can rest only upon a very superficial view of the documents; the dialogues of St Gregory and Caesarius of Heisterbach, to go no farther, are full of trances and visions. The *Speculum Spiritualium* shows this confusion between God's and Satan's revelations as a difficulty of monastic life (ff. 28 b, and 29 a).

<sup>2</sup> An interesting parallel may be found in a speech against modern spiritualism, delivered at the Anglo-Catholic Congress of 1920 by the Rev. Arnold Pinchard, Secretary of the English Church Union (*Times*, July 2, 1920). "On the other hand, he urged, there was a grave danger. If, as seemed probable on the evidence, there was some real communication carried on by these means with the spirit-world, it was entirely possible that those who responded from the other side were either wandering spirits of the lost, earth-bound perhaps, but certainly antagonistic alike to God and man, or still more probably, members of the Hierarchy of Darkness—devils who took advantage of the folly and credulity of man in order to lure him away from God and from the truth as it was in Jesus, and to gain ascendancy over the spirit of the individual with malign intent and disastrous results. No test could be devised which would exclude the possibility of impersonation, since the spirit-mind, with its immense intellectual range and opportunity, had easy access to all knowledge of any past event which was to be found in human consciousness."

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *Lives of the Brethren*, p. 255; P.L. vol. 176, pp. 583-4; Wadding, an. 1261 (IV, 173-4), and 1293 (V, 317). Especially significant is the whole of Gerson's *Tractatus Foedae Tentationis* (*Opera*, ed. Paris, IV, 972).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Lives of the Brethren*, pp. 36, 96, 220, 240.

them, his victory is final." Bromyard is only saying what dozens of others express at greater length, when he writes: "Even the saints sometimes see devils at their death, as we see in the case of Christ...and in that which we read of the Mother of God, though in an apocryphal history, how all her life long she besought her son that He would deign, at the moment of death, to guard her from that vision of demons." He goes on to quote the cases of St Martin and St Bernard (M. xi, 47). The monk, therefore, and especially the sensitive monk, whatever might have been his life, had an even greater horror than the worldling of sudden death—a moment when the Devil might, just for one fatal moment, find him unprepared. Deathbed apostasy, to a good man, was a contingency as real and as omnipresent as its converse, the last momentary repentance of the dying thief: the one implied the other. It was wise to prepare himself by constant meditation on graves and worms and epitaphs; the tears ran down from St Arsenius's eyes all day long; Abbot Evagrius warned his fellows, as they sat in their cells, to think continually of death and the pains of hell; "never forget these things, whether in thy cell or without" (*Vitaspatrum*, I, col. 862). The Dance of Death is a specially monastic conception.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MASS

EVEN psalmody, in later monasticism, did not play so great a part as the Mass. Hitherto, we have scarcely even approached this subject. Its consideration brings us now to extremely controversial ground; indeed, some will feel the very postponement to be controversial, and will urge that the Mass should have come first and foremost in any sketch of medieval religion. If we had been dealing only with the real saints, this might be true; but there is perhaps no point on which average religion fell so far below its ideal as on this of the Mass. To the average Orthodox of the Middle Ages, this supreme ceremony of the official church did not fulfil that Pauline word: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Even in its most spiritual sense—and no modern student has a right to ignore how spiritually many men understood it, or what strength it brought into their lives—the worship of Christ in the consecrated Host is difficult to reconcile with such evangelical sentences as "neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem... the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." The Mass, as distinguished from the Eucharist—that is, the medieval conception as distinguished from Justin Martyr's worship, or from that which is reflected in 1 Corinthians—was a localization and professionalization of what had once been a far more spontaneous and congregational service. And, in baser minds, it developed very base superstitions. Therefore I enter upon this chapter with some reluctance, though it is a very necessary part of my subject. Mr Belloc, from one point of view, is entirely justified in complaining that Mr Wells, in the medieval portion of his *Outline of History*, should have omitted a "plain and at the same time absolutely fundamental piece of European history," and should have said "not one word on the Eucharist"<sup>1</sup>. But, from the other and equally obvious point of view, how is a non-Catholic

<sup>1</sup> *London Mercury*, Nov. 1920, p. 60.

to speak of Transubstantiation? A necessarily unsympathetic analysis—or at best, half-sympathetic—of a belief which to some minds seems the most sacred of all, exposes the writer to misunderstandings which most of us, as we grow older, are increasingly glad to avoid. There are many things which transcend not only all speech but even all discursive thought; mystic doctrines are intelligible only to the mystic mind; and Mr Belloc would have been even less pleased with Mr Wells if the latter, instead of ignoring the Mass, had described it precisely as he conceived it. But, without trespassing upon those deeper feelings which we may heartily respect without pretending to share them, it is possible to range over the lower ground, confining ourselves mainly to the popular medieval conception of the Eucharist, and its effect upon popular practice. While recognizing that Bernard and Francis are among the greatest figures in history, we are bound to place them in their true historical environment. It is unquestionable that very much of these men's inward and outward strength came from their conception of the Mass; it is equally certain that much of what was best in Nelson and Cecil Rhodes came from their patriotism, but it is our duty also to consider what *Mass* and *patriotism* are and have been to the average soul; how far each of those ideas represents a stage forward in human thought; how far, again, that stage may have been left behind by further progress. That must be our standpoint in this chapter.

The complete absence of Christian records for at least twenty years after the Crucifixion, and the fragmentary nature of our documents for the first two centuries, while they leave ample room for theological speculation, render it impossible for the historian to pronounce confidently upon the earliest conception of the Last Supper. It is often maintained that oral traditions were handed down, during these generations, with an accuracy beyond that of the written word; but those who maintain this theory make no attempt to explain the divergence of our records on such a crucial point as the actual words which Christ pronounced in instituting this rite<sup>1</sup>. Some thirty vocables were

<sup>1</sup> Thinking people, even in the Middle Ages, sometimes recognized clearly that the written word is safer than tradition; see Giraldus Cambrensis, *Gemma Ecclesiastica* (*Opera*, R.S. vol. II), p. 5.

spoken to His twelve nearest disciples at a moment which all felt to be of overwhelming importance; four of our earliest documents profess to report what Christ said, yet only six words out of the thirty are common to all four accounts<sup>1</sup>. The earliest records are too vague to enable us to affirm clearly how far *This is my body*, *This is my blood*, were at first taken figuratively, and how far they were taken literally. Justin Martyr and Ignatius use language which is claimed by one party as implying the literal, by another the figurative, sense of the words. St Augustine, often as he recurs to the subject, leaves us in still worse doubt—or, rather, inclines distinctly in favour of the figurative interpretation<sup>2</sup>. Again, no community holding the medieval doctrine could well have celebrated the Eucharist as we know it to have been celebrated in very early times. A pictorial representation of this rite, preserved in the catacombs, is roughly contemporaneous with Justin Martyr's account (150 A.D.). Here, six

<sup>1</sup> If we count in the Roman Missal also, as representing tradition *par excellence*, then we find a still greater divergence; for it puts frankly non-scriptural words into Christ's mouth (*mysterium fidei*, etc.). This was a stumbling-block to thoughtful men as late as the thirteenth century. John, abbot of Clairvaux and ex-Archbishop of Lyons, consulted Innocent III on this point in 1202: the great Pope's answer stands in his register (bk v, ep. 121) and was incorporated in Canon Law (*Decret. Greg.* III, xli, c. 6). It amounts to this, that the variations among the four scriptural accounts lend probability to these further variations in the Missal; that the Roman tradition is thus vindicated; and that we must believe Christ to have spoken these non-scriptural words, and the Apostles to have handed them down to those who framed the first liturgies. This became, of course, the authoritative explanation, and is enshrined in such manuals for the clergy as the *Pupilla Oculi* (pars iv, cap. iv, e, f).

<sup>2</sup> Harnack maintains that his doctrine was essentially that of the Swiss reformer Zwingli, and therefore more Protestant than Luther's. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* can only plead that this is a "rather hasty conclusion"; and the long and disjointed argument which it opposes to Harnack will hardly carry conviction to unbiased readers. Moreover, the writer has not verified his references, which are very confused; and one, which he quotes as conclusive in favour of his own view, is followed a few lines later by words which flatly contradict it:

Definition of *Cath. Encyc.* (v, 575 a).  
 "The Body given to the Apostles [at the Last Supper] was the self-same Body that was crucified on Good Friday; and the Chalice drunk by them, the self-same Blood that was shed on the Cross for our sins."

Augustine, *Enarr. in Psalmum* xcvi, § 9 (following the words appealed to in *Cath. Encyc.* p. 577). Christ at the Last Supper instructed His Apostles, saying, "Understand spiritually that which I have spoken; ye are not about to eat this Body which ye see, nor are ye about to drink this Blood which those men shall shed who will crucify Me."

of the faithful are reclining on couches as at a secular banquet, while the bishop, seated at one end of the semicircular table, breaks a loaf taken from one of the bread-baskets; a shallow goblet of wine stands in front of him<sup>1</sup>. It can hardly be denied that this, taken by itself, bears out the Augustinian conception rather than that of the later Church; and other early evidence points in the same direction<sup>2</sup>. Long before Tertullian's time—in other words, from about the time of this picture—it had been usual for participants to take the consecrated bread home and eat it on some later occasion<sup>3</sup>. St Jerome, about 400 A.D., praises Exsuperius, the saintly bishop of Toulouse, for giving so liberally to the poor that his church furniture was of the simplest: "he beareth the Lord's Body in a wicker basket, and His Blood in a glass vessel"<sup>4</sup>. All this contrasts glaringly with the meticulous care with which the tiniest particles were guarded, and necessarily guarded under pressure of the most obvious logic, when once Transubstantiation had become the general doctrine of the Church. It is doubtless in view of this and similar logical conclusions, with which I shall deal only briefly in this chapter, that Dr R. L. Poole has spoken of it as "the strangest product of that materializing age, the definition of the doctrine of transubstantiation"<sup>5</sup>.

That doctrine crystallized very slowly. Not until 787 did the Eastern Church commit itself to a clear conciliar decision,

<sup>1</sup> J. Wilpert, *Fractio Panis* (Freiburg, i/B. 1895), pp. 8 ff. and plates xiii, xiv. The picture is also reproduced and explained in *Cath. Encyc.* v, 591. Throughout these eucharistic pages, I quote exclusively from original documents or from modern Roman Catholic authorities, with the single exception of the reference to Harnack in note 2 on the previous page.

<sup>2</sup> This comes out very clearly from the only two notices, of extreme brevity, which Mgr Duchesne, in his *Early History of the Church*, devotes to a rite which may truly be said to be the foundation of medieval religion. He writes: "A common daily meal was the sign and bond of their corporate life. There they celebrated the Eucharist, a perceptible and mysterious memorial of the invisible Master... The religious life was very like that of the Synagogue... The specifically Christian elements of this primitive worship were the Eucharist and the *charismata*, or extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Eucharist was celebrated in the evening, after a frugal meal (*agape*) taken in common. The Lord's Supper on the eve of His Passion was thus repeated." (Eng. translation, 1910, pp. 13, 35.)

<sup>3</sup> Wilpert, *l.c.* p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. 125 *ad fin.*

<sup>5</sup> *Illust. Hist. Med. Thought*, 1920, p. 44. The theory succeeded, adds Dr Poole, "not because it professed a conformity with St Augustine, but because the age was tending toward intellectual degradation."



at Nicaea, in favour of the Real Presence; and the West was tardier still. Western bishops had attended this Ecumenical Council of Nicaea; yet, about 855 A.D., it was possible for one of the most distinguished western theologians, the Benedictine Ratramnus, to deny the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist, resting mainly upon St Augustine; and a series of Benedictine theologians, during the next 80 years, agreed more or less definitely with Ratramnus. As late as 1050, the well-known Berengar of Tours combated the theory of Transubstantiation; but it was definitely consecrated by the scholastic theology of the twelfth century; and at last it was dogmatically proclaimed by Innocent III at the great Lateran Council of 1215. The first decree of that Council asserts that "Christ's body and blood is truly contained in the Sacrament of the Altar under the appearance of bread and wine, the bread being transubstantiated into His body, and the wine into His blood by God's power." The Council of Trent defined further, that not only the bread became Christ's body and the wine His blood, but that every particle of the consecrated wafer, when broken, contained the whole God-man, body, blood and soul: "really and substantially the body and blood together with the soul and the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the whole Christ"; from which it necessarily follows (as the Middle Ages had decided from the thirteenth century onwards), that the Consecrated Host must be adored with exactly the same adoration which would be given to the God-Christ if He appeared visibly before His worshippers<sup>1</sup>. These were conclusions which followed with inexorable logic from the premiss, once granted, that Christ's words must be taken in their most literal sense, and that they had been intended from the first to state "the content and the constituent parts of a sacrament with such clearness of terminology as to exclude categorically every error in liturgy and worship"<sup>2</sup>. The difficulty of reconciling this with St Augustine's doctrine has already been noted; but the later Middle Ages started from this postulate of literal interpretation, and the scholastic logicians worked it out fearlessly in all its implications. Aquinas, the most balanced of all, decides that none of the

<sup>1</sup> *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Sess. XIII, chap. viii, canons 1, 3, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Cath. Encyc.* v, 375 a.

substance of bread and wine remains after consecration; that all is turned into Christ's Body and Blood, not by the receiver's faith, but in virtue of the priest's words, and that the whole Christ is contained, not only both in the bread and in the wine taken separately, but also in every separate particle of either element<sup>1</sup>. Gabriel Biel, "the last of the Schoolmen" (d. 1495) followed this out to its logical consequence:

Not only are these four constituents aforesaid present in the Holy Eucharist—viz., Body, Blood, Soul, and Godhead—but also their properties, accidents and perfections of nature and glory... Wherefore [the consecrated elements] contain four endowments of the body of glory; a fixed harmony of the parts, the primary and secondary qualities, and the due complexion of the working parts and organs... Nor do they only contain all things which make for the perfection of the body and limbs, but also everything which belongs to the adornment and beauty of a body; as hair, nails, beard, and all else pertaining to the comeliness of that glorious Body which Christ resumed at His wondrous and glorious resurrection, wherein also He sitteth at the right hand of the Father and is presented to the sight of the Saints. Therein also are the natural and glorious perfections of His soul; viz., His knowledge of the Divine Essence and of all things, both in word and in their proper kind. Likewise also His blessed fruition and affections and loves and other acts and delights of His will. To this we must add the operations and qualities of His senses, both external and internal. For, if any of these perfections were lacking to Christ as [He is] in the sacrament, then His being in the sacrament would tend to the great imperfection of Christ's Soul and Body; for, as existing there, He would lose some perfection which would inexist for Him in heaven; and this would seem absurd. For thus it would be less delectable to Christ, (as to the Body and Soul,) to be in the Eucharist than to be in heaven, if, as being there, He lacked any bodily or spiritual delectation<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Sum. Theol.* III a, q. 75, §§ 1, 3, 4; q. 78, § 4; q. 76, §§ 1-4. Naturally, the movement did not stop here. In the seventeenth century a Jesuit in high office at Naples: "prêcha pour exhorter les fidèles à communier le jour de la fête de Ste-Anne, parce (disait-il) qu'on recevoit dans l'Eucharistie la propre chair de cette Sainte: ce qu'il prouvait par des raisonnements à perte de vue, qui auraient également fait trouver dans ce divin mystère la propre chair d'Adam... Un honnête homme a entendu autrefois prêcher à un Car[me?] qu'afin de communier par dévotion pour la Ste Vierge, il ne fallait pas regarder que c'était le corps de Jésus-Christ qu'on recevoit dans le S. Sacrement, mais que par un ragoût fin et exquis de spiritualité, on devait considérer que l'on y recevoit une chair formée du plus pur sang de la Ste-Vierge." (J. B. Thiers, *Traité des Superstit.* Avignon, 1777, II, 266; cf. E. B. Pusey, *Eirenicon*, 1865, p. 169.)

<sup>2</sup> *Sacri Canonis Missae Expositio*, Lectio XLII, § v. See the preceding

The contemporary *Summa Angelica*, a standard encyclopedia for the instruction of the more educated clergy, written by a Franciscan friar, finds it necessary to warn them that we cannot so far localize these attributes as "to say 'Christ has His feet in one part of the Host, His head in another, and so on with the other members'; for all parts are together under every part of the Host" (*Eucharistia*, I, § 32). So far had a thousand years of medieval development brought the Church forward from St Augustine's declaration that Christ's Body and Blood at the Last Supper were *not* that body which hung, or that blood which was shed, upon the Cross.

But while some, in their robust faith, could work these theories out unflinchingly to their strangest consequences, there were many others who doubted, whether wilfully or reluctantly, even of the first postulate. These steps in eucharistic evolution were slow, fitful and sometimes locally partial. The denial of the Chalice to the laity (which rested on the doctrine that the Host contained both Body and Blood) was very irregular both in place and time; so also with the Sacring-bell, and the custom of prostration before the newly-consecrated Host, and so forth<sup>1</sup>. Even on such an important point as the question whether it was possible for the priest to change not only leavened but also unleavened bread into the Body of the Lord, the Greek Church was not only categorically opposed to the Latins, but claimed to have received its own usage of leavened bread by the directest Apostolic succession from St Peter and his colleagues, a great blow to the asserted security of oral tradition<sup>2</sup>. The evidence goes to show that it was thoughtful and sincere souls who often felt the worst difficulties with regard to the

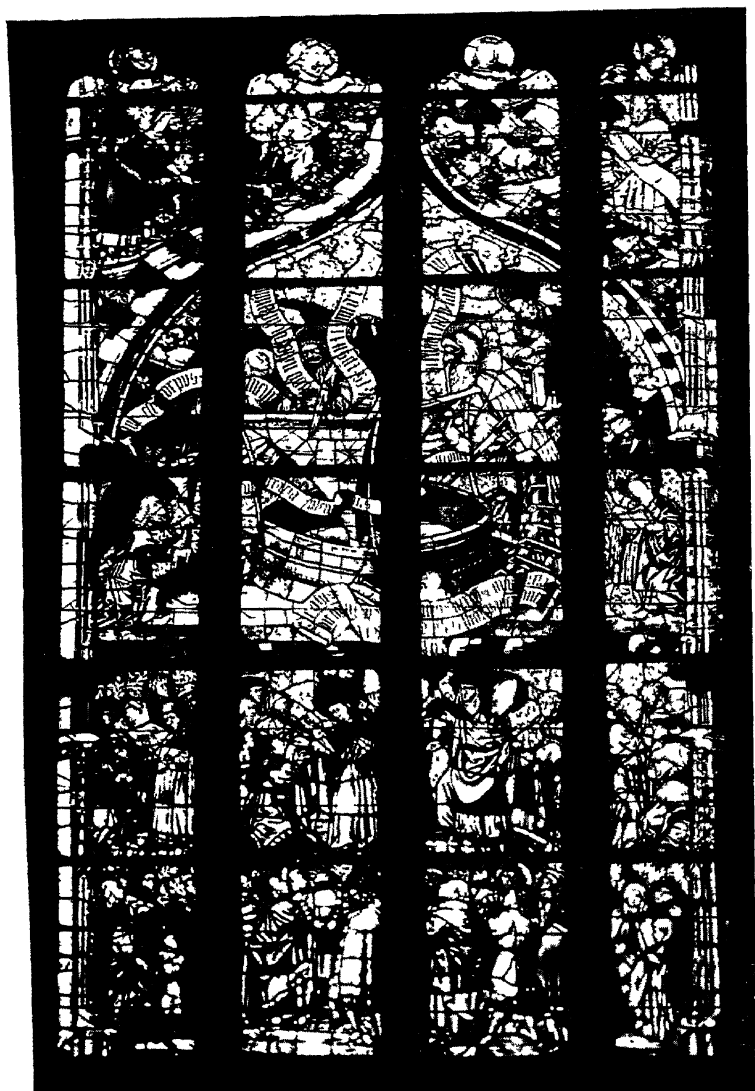
§§ P and Q for the proof that, though Christ's whole Godhead is in the bread and wine, yet God the Father and Holy Ghost are not there (ed. 1514, fol. 74 b, 75 a). On the other hand, later authors argued that Mary the Mother of God is there: see E. B. Pusey, *Eirenicon*, pp. 169-71. In all these lectures, Biel reproduces the teaching of his own Master, Eggelin of Mainz. It was Biel who persuaded the Count of Württemberg to found the University of Tübingen (1477) and finally took the monastic vows.

<sup>1</sup> A good rough idea of this may be gathered from Fleury's *Histoire Ecclésiastique*, where the most important enactments are mentioned under their respective years; see 1201, § 36; 1202, § 46; 1219, § 24; 1234, §§ 36 and 37; 1244, § 17; 1254, § 47; 1255, § 8; 1267, § 57; 1284, § 13; 1304, § 45, etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1234, § 37, *Council of Nymphaea*.



MELCHIZEDEK AND ABRAHAM, REIMS CATHEDRAL



THE HOSTIENMÜHLE OF BERNE

Body of the Lord<sup>1</sup>. Hence a whole series of miracles, closely related in type, for the removal of such doubts.

The two earliest are recorded in *Vitaspatrum*. When St Basil, celebrating the Eucharist, "divided the loaf into three portions," a Jew who had mingled with the congregation "saw a child being cut limb by limb in the Saint's hands; and, when the others communicated, he also came up; and that which was given him was flesh indeed; then he approached the chalice, which was full of blood, and wherein he shared." He fur-tively reserved portions both of the flesh and blood, showed them to his wife, and next day sought baptism with his whole family. The next miracle is even more significant, dealing as it does with involuntary doubt. An aged Egyptian monk "who was great in this life, but simple in faith, erring because he was unlearned, said that the bread which we take was not the natural Body of Christ, but a figure thereof." Two fellow-monks of his own age argued with him in vain; they agreed to pray all together for a week for a revelation from God; after which they went together to the Eucharist:

Then were the eyes of their understanding opened; and, when the loaves were laid upon the altar, it seemed to these three alone as if a little boy lay there. And, when the priest stretched forth his hand to break the bread, the Angel of the Lord came down from heaven having a knife in his hand, wherewith he cut that child, catching the blood in a chalice; thus, as the priest brake the bread into small fragments, the angel also cut the boy's limbs into little pieces. So, when the old man went up to receive the communion, to him alone was given bleeding flesh; seeing which, he was afraid and cried: "Lord, I believe that the Bread laid upon the altar is Thy Body, and the Chalice is thy Blood." And forthwith that portion in his hand was turned to bread, according to the mystery; and he took it

<sup>1</sup> Quite apart, that is, from the painful scruples which beset celebrants under exceptional circumstances. The spider was to the medieval mind, next to the toad and the serpent, the most venomous of reptiles. The blessed William abbot of Clairvaux in 1236, was about to drain the Chalice when he saw this insect there. "Not considering the horror of taking this spider in the draught, the Father, for the reverence of the Sacred Blood, swallowed the nauseous insect. It was about a year afterwards that a pustule formed in one of his fingers, from which, instead of matter, there came forth this spider, whole and entire." (*The Cistercian Fathers*, 1st Series (1872), p. 153, from *Chronicon Villarense*.) The story is told by other medieval writers; three versions of it are recounted in Giral. Camb. *Gem. Eccles.* p. 122; it occurs again, with a less miraculous voiding of the venomous insect, in the life of St Conrad, printed by Surius (26 Nov.), and again in that of St Norbert.

in his mouth and blessed God. So the old men said unto him: "God knoweth man's nature, that it cannot eat of raw flesh; therefore doth He change His body into bread and His blood into wine, for those who receive it with faith." And they gave thanks unto God, that He had not permitted the old man's labours to be in vain; and they went back to their cells rejoicing<sup>1</sup>.

These two miracles, for the frank unbeliever and for the unwilling doubter, were not only repeated throughout the Middle Ages in word, but also re-enacted in deed, with a frequency which testifies to the public demand<sup>2</sup>. The most picturesque form, perhaps, is the story told by Eccleston of Peter of Tewkesbury, who was Fifth Provincial of the English Franciscans (1254-1258). He

was very familiar in the household of the lord Geoffrey Despenser. One day, when he came to that house, there entered the lord's little son John, and came most familiarly to Peter as he was always wont. But when this boy had gone to the chapel with his mother, and had seen the said father Peter celebrate Mass, and had come home again, then he fled from the aforesaid father, nor could his mother constrain him by any means to come to him. When therefore the mother sought the cause of his flight, he said that he had seen the father devour a little child on the altar in the chapel; wherefore he feared a like fate for himself.

A similar tale is told of Peter's contemporary Peter of Brabant, of whom a boy reported "brother Peter devoureth little children; for I have seen him eat one on the altar"<sup>3</sup>. The author of the *Vision of the Monk of Eynsham* owed his conversion, in great measure, to the sight of a little child in St Hugh of Lincoln's hands when he elevated the Host. Among the latest medieval records of this Child-Host miracle are two stories told by Thomas à Kempis of his contemporary Heinrich Brune. The first vision was vouchsafed to a pious layman who was troubled with spiritual temptations, "for he began to have certain doubts even concerning the Sacrament of the Altar, whether that were

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 73, cols. 301 and 979.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Girald. Camb. *Gem. Eccl.* p. 33. Master Richard, at Paris, "a model of religion, as it seemed, and of good morals among the clergy, afflicting his body with fasts and vigils, much abstinence and prayer, and spending all his substance in alms among the poor." But on his deathbed he confessed that he had never been able to believe that the Host was Christ's body.

<sup>3</sup> *Monum. Franciscana*, R.S. i, 68; *Analecta Franciscana*, III, 240. The other references are to *Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, R.S. 241, 362, and Kempis, *Opera*, ed. Sommalius, 1759, III, 90.

Christ's true body." In the second case, while "a priest of little knowledge and tainted reputation" was celebrating, a lady who knew his character wondered in her own mind whether so unworthy a person could perform so vast a miracle as Transubstantiation. But, at the elevation, Christ himself appeared in the Host; and a good priest, to whom the lady confessed this, was able to reassure her. "God hath permitted this for thy salvation, that thou shouldst henceforth have no evil thoughts of the priests, nor doubt of the truth of the consecration, even though the celebrants may be men of evil fame and unworthy life." These stories were reprinted in 1595 among the select examples added to Peter the Venerable's *Book of Miracles*; and Rosignoli, a century later, tells a similar story in connexion with the Jesuit missionaries<sup>1</sup>. Though à Kempis calls it "a new and unusual vision," this was far from the case; it can only have been new in that district and in that generation. The references given in my footnote might easily be doubled if it were worth while; Peter the Venerable records a similar miracle in the early twelfth century; in 1254 it was seen at Douai, and was commemorated by a contemporary painting which survived until 1597 at least. Even before this time it had become frequent. While the blessed Peter of Malines celebrated and elevated the Host:

a little child appeared, who was first seen of the children there by reason of their cleanness and purity of heart; and these, in their wonder, excited their mothers to see the miracle. After his death, so many miracles were wrought before the Sacrament over his tomb that the divine service was sore troubled by the concourse of people; so that the Guardian of the convent, as it is said, was compelled to resort thereunto and forbid him to work further miracles: to which command he obeyed<sup>2</sup>.

It is treated as a commonplace by Aquinas, who discusses the difficulty of reconciling it with Transubstantiation (*Sum. Theol.* pars III, q. lxxvi, art. 8). So also the Dominican Bromyard treats it (s.v. *Eucharistia*, VI, 24-5); and the author of *Pupilla Oculi*, who was chancellor of Cambridge University in 1385, finds space in his brief treatise to warn the ordinary parish priest as to his behaviour "if it should sometimes befall that the Body of Christ, after consecration, should appear under any

<sup>1</sup> *Maraviglie di Dio nel Divinissimo Sacramento* (Venice, 1717), I, 183.

<sup>2</sup> Wadding, an. 1231, § 51.



other form than that of bread; for instance, in form of a child or a morsel of flesh or blood" (pars iv, cap. vi, y) and it is treated with the same familiarity, as a common occurrence, in the still more popular and accredited *Summa Angelica* (*Eucharistia*, I, § 34). The author's discussion here shows that the orthodox were puzzled to know how, if the whole Christ were in the Host, His visible presence should be so puerile in form, and not rather the Christ of maturity. The common-sense speculations of the multitude, no less than the hair-splitting syllogisms of the schoolmen, ended in these anatomical and physiological questions.

For there was another endemic miracle, which at times and places became epidemic, of the Bleeding Host, or the Chalice full of Blood. Bromyard, giving an instance of this after several child-miracles, moralizes over it in true friar fashion.

For, as it is written in the 6th chapter of the first Book of Maccabees that men showed unto the elephants the blood of grapes to provoke them to fight, lest they should fail to battle bravely; and, again, as the bread of dogs' whelps is dipped in blood of their prey, it is said, or such blood is dashed upon their mouths, that they may learn to chase their prey bravely. . . so in all the cases aforesaid God showeth His flesh and blood to provoke them to faith, and in order that those who, by reason of unbelief, were far off from him, by such visions of flesh or blood might draw near to him boldly with faith.

The comparison has more aptness than, from the purely theological point of view, we might naturally surmise; for these blood-miracles commonly provoked the faithful to an armed attack upon the nearest colony of Jews; it was supposed that these had stolen a sacred Host in order to repeat upon the indwelling Deity the indignities of the first Good Friday. The best-known incident of this kind cannot be better told than in Fleury's words (*Hist. Ecc. an. 1338*, § 73)<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> For other similar stories see Caes. Heist. II, 178-83, 197, 211, 216; *Alphabet of Tales*, E.E.T.S. I, 149, 211, and the Mass of St Gregory in his life in the *Golden Legend*; Rosignoli, pp. 3, 129; AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. v, pp. 292-3; and especially *Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, R.S. (164), p. 245, which contrasts the behaviour of a real saint, in the face of these prodigies, with that of the ordinary faithful and the clergy. I have translated part of this story in *Social Life in Britain*, p. 196. Dom Martène saw one of these bloody Hosts still preserved in the eighteenth century, and another miraculous Host at another abbey (*Voyage Littéraire*, pp. 144, 167). Grosseteste devoted his

In a town called Pulca, in the diocese of Passau, a layman found before a Jew's house, under some straw in the street, a bloody Host. The people believed this wafer to have been consecrated, and caused the parson of the town to take it up and bring it into the church, whither it was followed by a great concourse of worshippers who supposed that this blood had flowed miraculously from the wounds inflicted upon the Host by the Jews. On this suspicion, without any further examination or judicial procedure, the Christians began to rush upon the Jews and slew several of them; but the wisest judged that this was rather for the sake of plunder than to avenge the supposed sacrilege. This conjecture was strengthened by a similar accident which had befallen a little while earlier at Neuburg in that same diocese, where a certain clerk put into the church an unconsecrated Host dipped in blood, and confessed afterwards in the presence of Bishop Wernher and other trustworthy witnesses that he himself had stained it for the sake of raising scandal against the Jews. This Host was worshipped for some time as being our Lord's body; but at last it was found to have been eaten by maggots<sup>1</sup>. Another clerk replaced it by a similar unconsecrated and bloody Host, which was honoured as the first had been; and this error was still flourishing when Duke Albert of Austria wrote to Pope Benedict [XII] a letter reporting the facts and asking what he was to do. The Pope answered: "These facts deserve the most careful examination; since, on the one hand, the worship of an unconsecrated Host is a mockery of the Sacrament and a deceit imposed upon the faithful; on the other hand, if the Jews have committed this crime, we cannot leave it unpunished without covering our religion with shame and drawing God's wrath upon us."

He therefore charged the bishop of Passau with a full examination into the matter. The result in this case is not known; but the belief spread in Germany, and the peasants massacred many

great powers to reconciling Christ's resurrection in full flesh and blood with the fact that there were relics of the Holy Blood left on earth (M. Paris, *Hist. Major*, R.S. iv, 643, and vi, 138 ff.)

<sup>1</sup> This, however, was no real evidence against its consecration; in my third volume I shall have occasion to quote a case where a priest is presented for having kept the consecrated Host so long in the monstrance that it had become worm-eaten. (*Zeitschrift f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, 1875, vol. 27, p. 253; see also the Ste Gudule case in app. 7.) Aquinas recognizes this as one of the difficulties in his theory of Transubstantiation, and discusses it with a thoroughness so interesting in itself, and so characteristic of medieval religion, that I give it in full in that appendix. Another difficult case frequently dealt with in manuals of instruction is the case where a mouse had eaten the Host; see for instance, *Pupilla Oculi*, pars iv, c. viii, §§ ak, al; *Sum. Angel. Eucharistia*, i, § 34 and iii, §§ 7-8; and Guibert in P.L. vol. 156, cols. 640, 643.

more Jews under cover of religious zeal<sup>1</sup>. In the fifteenth century, Cardinal Nicholas of Cues had to struggle against a similar superstition of the Bleeding Host<sup>2</sup>.

If it was fatally easy to organize massacres on such suppositions, this was not only because the Jews were often rich and hated; it was also because those practices which were so easily credited to them bore a very close resemblance to things commonly practised among the orthodox. Not only did these frequently resort to the Jews for magic—the Pope complained of this to the world in 1290<sup>3</sup>—but there is also overwhelming evidence for the prevalence of magic practices among Catholic populations with the consecrated Host; hence the jealous care with which bishops, archdeacons and rural deans were bound to see that the holy pyx was kept safely everywhere, generally under lock and key<sup>4</sup>. Caesarius of Heisterbach tells a sequence of such stories (I, 171 ff.); the most interesting of these had already been related in a different form by Peter the Venerable (*Lib. Mir.* I, 1) and was repeated soon after by Thomas of Cantimpré (*De Apibus*, II, 40) and many others. A woman stole a Host and put it in her hive to stay a mortality among her bees;

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Le Jubilé d'un Faux Miracle* (Brussels, 1870). The author has collected from the chroniclers five cases of Jew-and-Host miracles, followed in each case by massacre and spoliation, and culminating in that of 1370 which had been kept alive ever since by annual and jubilee celebrations, down to 1870. Analyzing the actual documentary evidence, which has been preserved in the civil and ecclesiastical archives of the city, he proves (1) that nobody shows knowledge in 1370 of the Host having been stabbed or having shed blood, (2) that the wounds and the bleeding were probably invented somewhere about 1435, when the Dean and Chapter of Ste Gudule wanted Papal indulgences to build a chapel worthy of their Miraculous Hosts, and (3) that, to maintain popular faith, the orthodox had persistently falsified the actual text of the documents, down to 1720 at least (p. 14). The author points out how the defenders of the miracle were agreed that it had been wrought to confirm the fainting faith of the age. In 1414, for instance, a Flemish heretic was teaching that Jews and Pagans would be saved, and that God, the Omnipresent, was no more in the Host than in hell (p. 27). I have been able to procure a copy of the rare treatise upon which the author of this article bases most of his criticism; it certainly justifies his strictures (*Historie van het H. Sacrament van Mirakelen*, etc., by S. Ydens, canon of St Gudule, printed at Brussels in 1608).

<sup>2</sup> E.H.R. vol. 37 (1922), p. 431.

<sup>3</sup> Wadding, v, 232.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Lyndwood, *Prov.* 1679, pp. 247-8 and notes; cf. *Pupilla Oculi*, pars IV, c. viii, § ai. Something of the same care was necessary for the chrism-oil and the font-water; it was strictly prescribed that every font should have a locked cover; the hasp, or traces of it, are almost always visible at the present day.

"these little insects [*vermiculi*], recognizing their Creator, built from their sweetest of honeycombs a tiny chapel of wondrous cunning for this sweetest of guests; wherein, erecting an altar of the same material, they laid the Most Holy Body thereon." Another sprinkled it over her cabbages as a remedy against caterpillars; an unchaste priest, unable to seduce a woman, took the Host in his mouth to her, "hoping, if he might thus kiss her, to incline her will to his desires by the virtue of that Sacrament"; Jacques de Vitry tells of a woman who similarly stole it for a philtre<sup>1</sup>. Sprenger, in his *Malleus Maleficarum*, tells a like tale of "the detestable habit of women" in this matter, and utters a general warning:

For this reason, all rectors and priests who give Communion unto the people are always enjoined to exercise the utmost diligence to see that the women communicate with mouths wide open, with tongues well stretched out, and with veils far removed from their faces. The more diligence is used here, the more witches are thus discovered<sup>2</sup>.

These things followed inevitably from the fetishism prevalent among the most orthodox. If (as Caesarius tells us) a priest could drown certain otherwise undrownable heretics by casting the Host into that river, and if St Antony of Padua could convert them by showing it to a mule, which knelt before it, why should not the charm be equally efficacious against an invasion of caterpillars? The devil's hierarchy was always modelled very exactly on God's, and his works imitated the ecclesiastical sacraments and holy seasons; Sprenger brings that out in detail. And indeed it would be difficult to find, in the diabolical superstitions, anything more absurd than the orthodox superstitions which were their prototypes or their analogues. There were men who put the Mass frankly to immoral uses. Petrus Cantor of Paris, and Giraldus Cambrensis in England,

<sup>1</sup> *Exempla*, p. 113. See appendix 12, "The Host and the Mass in Witchcraft."

<sup>2</sup> Pars II, q. i, c. 5 (ed. 1600, p. 282). Giraldus Cambrensis believed that Pope Sylvester II, being an adept in magic, was accustomed to slip the Host out of his mouth into a little bag which he kept at his neck, "when this was revealed by his own confession, a statute was made in the Roman Church that Popes should turn towards the people at the time of Communion." The explanation, of course, is false; but the belief itself is significant (*Gem. Ecc.* p. 34).

make the same complaint, about 1200 A.D., in words that are practically identical, one utilizing the other's pronouncement:

Moreover—I say it even weeping—some have turned this great sacrament to magic arts, celebrating Masses over waxen images to curse a man; or, again, by way of imprecation they sing a Mass of the faithful ten or more times over, that he may die before the tenth day or soon after, and that he may be laid with the dead.

Giraldus sees no remedy but to cut down the number of churches and altars, and especially to abolish all mass-moneys except twice a year, or on very special occasions. On p. 129 he derides the excuses of priests who use the Mass superstitiously<sup>1</sup>. But the practice of maledictory Masses was still alive at the end of the fifteenth century, when we find a friar asking:

What of him who sings a Mass that God may destroy other folk? He sinneth mortally; nor does it harm him to whose destruction it is sung, since the nature of a sacrament is to do good. Yet this practice can be excused from mortal sin when those [against whom it is sung] are enemies of the state and hinderers of that which is good<sup>2</sup>.

A practice equally superstitious, though less immoral, is enshrined in Canon Law. Gratian quotes as authoritative a decree of the Synod of Worms which runs as follows:

It befalleth oftentimes that thefts are committed in monasteries, nor can the thief be found. We decree therefore that, when the monks themselves have to purge themselves from such suspicion, a Mass be celebrated by the Abbot or by someone to whom he hath committed the matter, in the presence of all the brethren; and at the end of Mass, let all take the Holy Communion with these words: "May the Lord's Body be for my proof this day!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gir. Camb. *Gem. Ecc.* p. 137; Pet. Cant. P.L. vol. 205, col. 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Sum. Angel.*, *Missa*, § 54.

<sup>3</sup> Gratian, *Decret.* pars II, c. ii, q. 5, § 23. The commentator speaks of this as abrogated, but the two references he gives are quite inconclusive; and, more than two centuries later, the *Summa Angelica* treats it as a thing which the clergy need to be warned against (*Eucharistia*, III, § 40). According to Regino of Prüm (an. 869), and many chroniclers after him, Pope Hadrian II thus decided between himself and the perjured Lothaire of France; he compelled the king and his courtiers to take the Eucharist with himself, and then adjured them with the words: "If ye are innocent, may this Communion be for your remission; else, may it be for your damnation." The king and all his party died within the year. (Cf. Sigebert of Gembloux, an. 870, and Higden, R.S. vi, 340.) Lambert of Hersfeld asserts that Gregory VII challenged the Emperor Henry IV to a similar test (an. 1077; ed. Holder-Egger, p. 296). Holder-Egger believes that, in this particular case, the

A similar proof was recommended to bishops or priests accused of homicide, adultery or theft (§ 26); but this was overridden by the system of compurgation. It was forbidden, even in Gratian's time, to give the Eucharist to a duellist or champion in a trial by combat (§ 22; cf. *Pup. Oculi*, pars iv, c. viii, r).

The belief in its magical properties underlay the superstition which often denied this sacrament to the condemned criminal. Of all the grievous mistakes into which Newman fell through hasty generalizations from the modern Roman Catholicism which he knew, and from those chosen spiritual writings of the Middle Ages which he had really read, few are farther from the truth than his impassioned words on this subject<sup>1</sup>. That immeasurable superiority which he here finds in his new creed is due mainly to his ignorance of history; it was the Roman Church which in many places, and for many generations, sent thousands to meet their Creator in a fashion even more callous, when her professions are considered, than that for which Newman justly blames the English Protestantism of his day. In those days when men believed in the great, if not incalculable, spiritual force of the consecrated elements in themselves, we find Giraldus Cambrensis writing:

It is plain also that the Eucharist should be given to the thief who begs it at the gallows-foot and who is penitent; yet many do abhor to grant this; either lest the Body of Christ, if by chance it were not swallowed but kept in the mouth, should seem once again to suffer hanging; or, again, lest perchance the thief should take it whole from his mouth and keep it to work his liberation, as it is certain that this hath sometimes befallen in fact... Yet in fact the use of the Church in these days is contrary... and thieves are now buried [without Church rites] beside the gallows, however penitent they may seem.

Canon Law, it is true, took the criminal's part here; but in practice this leniency was often repudiated. A record quoted by Wadding shows that the Italian parish clergy of the eighteenth century were not accustomed to accompany condemned criminals

chronicler is drawing upon his imagination and copying from Regino; but, if so, this was only because the scene itself was so common; see the instances quoted by Ducange, s.v. *Eucharistia—Purgatio per E.*

<sup>1</sup> *The Social State of Catholic Countries no Prejudice to the Sanctity of the Church*, pp. 20-23. See appendix 13

to the scaffold<sup>1</sup>; and, nearly four centuries after Gratian had embodied the merciful decree in his *Decretum*, Geiler of Kaysersberg fought one of the hardest of all his fights to procure the Eucharist for these poor wretches; his bitterest opponents were Religious, one of whom brought against him this unanswerable argument: "If the Eucharist were given to thieves, then the country-folk would say, 'Lo! Christ is racked on the wheel.'" This was only a natural consequence of the materialistic conceptions which had so long been encouraged; but Geiler fought his way through "insults and persecutions" to obtain the consolations of the Church at Strassburg for these criminals, to whom, in France, even confession was denied until 1386, and the Eucharist for many centuries later<sup>2</sup>. As the sacramental wine had gradually become too sacred to be shared by the laity, so the sacrament itself became too precious for those polluted souls. It would be an encouragement to crime if the criminal were to enjoy the full advantages of the Mass.

What those advantages were, we may gather from more than one sober and authoritative source. St Odo of Cluny complains that "some men are so deceived with diabolical illusions as to believe that, even though they be still in their sins, yet they are purged by the reception of that most holy food and drink"<sup>3</sup>. Here he is evidently speaking of the clergy themselves; and certainly some most responsible priests gave painful encouragement to the temptation of treating the Mass as a fetish. A manuscript found at Burnham Abbey, Bucks, and called "Nineteen Virtues of the Mass," alleges Saints Augustine, Chrysostom,

<sup>1</sup> An. 1261 (iv, 173). A friar founded at Perugia the *Scuola di Morte*, to supply this deficiency.

<sup>2</sup> Gratian, *Decret.* pars II, c. xxvi, q. 6, § 6, and gloss: "Let it not be refused even to him who is to be hanged"; cf. *Pap. Oc.* pars iv, c. viii, s; Lyndwood, p. 233; *Sum. Ang., Eucharistia*, III, § 26. For Geiler's campaign in 1482 see Dacheux, pp. 46 ff.; Riegger, *Amoenitates*, fasc. I, p. 121, and Geiler, *Sermones et Varii Tractatus*, 1518, fol. 159 a. The papal nuncio refused to pronounce definitely for him against his monkish opponents; it was long before Geiler could get the bishop to move; but his persistency won the day. The merciful custom which he introduced was continued under the Reformation and lasted until 1681; then, "lorsque Strasbourg fut réuni à la France, les condamnés à mort se virent de nouveau refusés la communion, conformément à l'usage de l'église gallicane" (Dacheux, *l.c.*).

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 133, col. 578. Odo, like many others, attributes the irreverence of his age partly to the multiplication of Masses: "we trifle contemptuously with this holy mystery" (cols. 572, 577).

Bernard, Anselm and Bede, in favour of the most extraordinary claims; the passages quoted are certainly spurious in some cases, if not in all. Even more startling is its use of St Paul and St Matthew, which may be added to the many proofs of Bible-ignorance even among the clergy of the Middle Ages.

Saint Paul saith, that the fifthe Virtue is that more availeth the head or chief prayer than all other prayers; that is to say, the Mass is the prayer of Christ who is our Head, and we are His members; therefore the Mass more than all other prayers availeth... Saint Matthew saith, that the seventh Virtue is, that a man which is penitent of his sins and devoutly heareth the Mass, whatsoever he asketh rightfully it shall be granted to him<sup>1</sup>.

Myrc, the good Austin canon of Lilleshall who undertook to guide his uninstructed fellow-priests in the fourteenth century, quotes a pseudo-Augustinian sentence to the effect that no man, on the day whereon he has seen the Host elevated at Mass, can lack food, or have his idle words and oaths recorded against him, or die by sudden death, or lose his eyesight; further, that every foot he goes to see that sight "shall be told, to stand in stead when thou hast to them need"<sup>2</sup>. These superstitions were current in all countries and at all times; Jean Gerson complains, "it would seem indecent in many ways for men to preach to the people that, if a man hears Mass devoutly, that day he shall not become blind nor die suddenly nor want for sufficient food, and so on with other temporal goods." He argues at great length against the belief, showing that it must tend in the long run rather to infidelity, in proportion as men see it contradicted by facts, than to belief. And he adds, very pertinently, that this kind of superstition, connecting temporal advantages with the sacraments, "renders the people (who are already most prone thereunto) still more apt to believe in suggestions, curious beliefs, and witchcraft" (iv, 228 ff.). The Sarum Missal of 1532 gives "a Mass for avoiding sudden death, appointed by Pope Clement at Avignon": the rubric assures us that if we hear it

<sup>1</sup> *Antiquarian Repertory* (Grose and Astle), II, 431 ff.

<sup>2</sup> E.E.T.S. 1868, p. 10. This description of the Real Presence on p. 8 is in flat contradiction to that which I have quoted above from the real Augustine. The teaching as to oaths goes some way to explain Chaucer, *C. T. B.* 1170 ff., and the protest of a prisoner accused of heresy before the inquisitors: "I am not a heretic; for I eat flesh, and lie, and swear, and am a faithful Christian" (H. C. Lea, *Inq.* I, 98, note).



"sudden death cannot harm thee; and this is certain and approved in Avignon and all the region round about"<sup>1</sup>.

But nothing could check the movement, even in the most exalted quarters. An extraordinarily picturesque story of the effect of Masses for the dead is that of the fishers who drew a lump of ice from the sea at harvest-tide, and brought the unexpected haul to their bishop, who happened to be tortured with gout. Presently a voice from the ice acquainted the bishop that this was a frozen soul, thus tormented for his sins. He could be delivered only by virtue of thirty Masses, which, amid strange diabolical hindrances, the bishop celebrated to the very end, whereupon "this ice was resolved into water"<sup>2</sup>. That same chapter of *The Golden Legend* contains a series of stories to the same effect; it will be better to end with one from a later time and a more authentic, though less accessible, source.

The coming of the friars gave a great stimulus to popular devotions; each new Order naturally magnified its own spiritual privileges; it was claimed from at least the early fourteenth century that St Francis, in reward for his wonderful imitation of Christ, had received from Him corresponding privileges:

Even as I, on the day of My death, descended into Hell and brought out all the souls that I found therein and led them to Paradise, by virtue of My Stigmata; so do I grant to thee at this hour, that thou shalt thus be conformed to Me in death, as thou hast been in life; and that, after thou hast passed away from this life, every year on the day of thy death thou shalt go to Purgatory, and in virtue of thy Stigmata that I have given thee, thou shalt bring out thence all the souls of thy three Orders, to wit, Minors, Sisters, and Tertiaries, and likewise those whom thou mayest find there, that had a devotion unto thee, and shalt lead them into Paradise<sup>3</sup>.

Other Orders, in rivalry with this kind of boast, extolled the value of their spiritual privileges, among the principal of which were the benefits of the frequent Masses sung in conventual churches. Busch, about 1450, found a Carmelite friar preaching about Germany the doctrine that "whensoever a Mass is celebrated, throughout the whole world, a soul is liberated from the pains of Purgatory." His reply to this boast, however victorious

<sup>1</sup> Skeat, *Notes to Piers Plowman*, p. 58 (on C. v, 116).

<sup>2</sup> *Golden Legend*, s.v. "All Souls"; retold in *Alphabet of Tales*, II, 442.

<sup>3</sup> *Analecta Franciscana*, III, 646; *Little Flowers*, p. 220.

in common-sense, was almost as materialistic as the superstition which it combated:

If as many souls were freed from Purgatory as there are Masses celebrated throughout the world, then there would not now be a soul left in Purgatory; for the sum-total of Masses celebrated throughout the world is greater than the daily number of Christian folk who die. Therefore Masses would now be superfluously celebrated, since there would be no soul left there<sup>1</sup>.

This is quite typical of the matter-of-fact spirit in which the most solemn of all Christian sacraments was frequently discussed.

Not but that there were frequent and outspoken protests against lower views, some of which we have already seen. But these protests availed little in face of the official encouragement given practically, if not theoretically, to mechanical conceptions of the Mass. This was an age when the accumulation of money or property beyond a certain point was difficult or impossible; yet spiritual treasures could be bought for money and accumulated to infinity. Trentals, annuals, triennials, had their market price; really wealthy folk could found chantries where Masses were to be said for their souls until doomsday<sup>2</sup>. With the multitude, this mechanical conception necessarily outweighed more spiritual conceptions of the sacrament; and, in process of time, it brought inevitable mechanical and financial difficulties. The Council of Salisbury, in 1217, decreed that Masses should no longer be sold, and that priests should no longer burden themselves with annuals or triennials, "whereby men must needs keep priests hired at a certain wage, or shift the burden by selling these things to others who can sing them." The monks had already thus burdened and thus begun to disburden themselves; in later generations, they employed still more of these hireling priests, who could always be had cheap<sup>3</sup>. In Chaucer's

<sup>1</sup> *De Rep.* lib. iv, c. 2 (p. 729). Meffret actually commits himself to a doctrine almost as absurd and unedifying as that which Busch here attacks (*Fest.* p. 307).

<sup>2</sup> The Trental is a series of thirty Masses; the other most usual periods were daily Masses for one or three years, or in perpetuity; cf. H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, 1921, pp. 200 ff. On a more modest scale were the month-mind or year-mind Masses; readers of Balzac's brief masterpiece, *La Messe de l'Athée*, will need no further explanation here.

<sup>3</sup> Compare the story told by Chamfort in about 1780 (*Œuvres de Chamfort et Rivarol* (Dentu, 1884), p. 67): "L'abbé Raynal, jeune et pauvre, accepta une messe à dire tous les jours pour vingt sous: quand il fut plus riche, il

day, we find Bromyard complaining that, the richer a priest was, the fewer Masses he said<sup>1</sup>. In religion, as in most other factors of civilization, this period with which we are dealing was truly a Middle Age, harmonizing completely neither with the ancient nor with the modern spirit. Few modern minds can more emphatically repudiate the material abuses which were so common, and few readers can be more shocked at Myrc's pseudo-Augustinian superstition, than Augustine himself would have been; nor could any Baptist dissent more emphatically from Franciscan or Carmelite boasts of Mass-efficacy than St Paul would have done.

But there is a strong tendency, in certain quarters, to judge this question from a standpoint at which Augustine's or Paul's or Spurgeon's judgements are all alike irrelevant. It is implied that this is less a question of history, or even of religion, than of taste; and that medieval faith was superior to ours because "in the ceremonial of the Mass, art comes full-tide"<sup>2</sup>. Is this assertion true in itself? and, if true, how much may we legitimately infer from it?

Is it true that the majority of unprejudiced judges would

la céda à l'abbé de La Porte, en retenant huit sous dessus: celui-ci, devenu moins gueux, la sous-loua à l'abbé Dinouart, en retenant quatre sous dessus, outre la portion de l'abbé Raynal; si bien que cette pauvre messe, grevée de deux pensions, ne valait que huit sous à l'abbé Dinouart." I have quoted elsewhere the case of Bury St Edmunds about 1280 A.D., when the eighty monks employed eleven hiring chaplains as assistants (Dugdale-Caley, III, 117). Even as early as about 950 A.D., among the 187 monks at Prum there were 100 priests *plus* a non-monastic priest to help them out with their Masses (Lamprecht, *Wirth*, III, 319). It seems probable that this hiring-out of Masses goes far to account for the large numbers of "titles" given to ordinands by monasteries; the giver of a title made himself responsible for the maintenance of the ordinand. It is quite possible that some of these were cases of pure charity; but what we know of the ordinary business dealings of the monks suggests that the large majority would be employed as vicarious Mass-singers. See appendix 14.

<sup>1</sup> S. i, § 10.

<sup>2</sup> R. A. Cram, *The Gothic Quest*, p. 292 (quoted by J. N. Figgis, *Civilisation at the Cross-Roads*, 1913, p. 292). It will be best to give the whole of this passage, to which Figgis's approval gives an importance which the words themselves can scarcely claim. "The established ceremonies of the High Mass take their place among the few supreme triumphs of art in all time; in a way the great artistic composition takes precedence of all in point of sheer beauty and poignant significance. There is no single building, no picture, no statue, no poem, that stands on the same level, even Parsifal is a weak imitation and substitute. In the ceremonial of the Mass art comes full tide."

put High Mass in a Gothic cathedral, with all its splendour of vestment and music and scenic effect, on a higher artistic level than a solemn sacrifice on the Acropolis or in Diana's Temple at Ephesus? Would they even put it definitely higher than religious dance and song under the cloudless sky of Palestine?

It is well seen, O God, how Thou goest; how Thou, my God and King, goest in the sanctuary: the singers go before, the minstrels follow after, in the midst are the damsels playing with the timbrels.

And even if we judge the Mass to be the most artistic of the three, is it therefore higher in the religious scale? St Bernard or St Francis would have answered emphatically *No!* and what reason have we to reject their judgement?<sup>1</sup> The Epistle to the Hebrews, so anxiously concerned to show that Christ had lost nothing of what was best in Judaism, calls upon us to "go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." The early Christians were proud to dissociate themselves from the outward splendour of rival worships. That it is which gives so much point to Augustine's story of the conversion of Victorinus, and which raises it even above that more dramatic story of the two young officers at Trèves<sup>2</sup>. For the whole point of Victorinus's conversion, and its whole beauty, lies in the deliberate sacrifice of a stately life for a new sort of existence which seemed steeped to the lips in vulgarity. This great Roman rhetorician, teacher of so many senators, whose statue had been put up in the Forum during his own lifetime, was arrested towards the end of his life by a Christian creed which, in those days, had no magnificence of Mass, and in which his own shoe-maker's or tailor's son might be an officiant of the uncouth mysteries. The Christian Scriptures he had learned to prize; but those he could read at home: "Does Christ desire more than our heart? and mine He

<sup>1</sup> See Prof. R. C. Jebb's essay *Has Art thriven best in an Age of Faith?* (Glasgow, 1889). He decides in the negative. Compare Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, pt iv, ch. iv, §§ 9, 10; ch. xviii, § 14, and Preface to 2nd edition, § 14. To the medieval witnesses we may add St Odo of Cluny: those who are so solicitous for the splendour of Mass-vestments and altar-plate would do well to purify their own hearts (P.L. vol. 133, col. 579). Miss Graham is too sweeping when she writes of the Cluniac view "that nothing was too splendid for the worship of God" (*Journ. Theol. Stud.* 1914, p. 186). The earlier stages of the Cluniac, as of other, reforms seem to have had a strong puritan tinge; cf. P.L. vol. 133, cols. 554 d, 555 c, 584 d, 588 c, 595, 607 a, 632 d. For the Dominicans, see *Vitae Fratrum*, pp. 280, 282, and *Hist. Litt. de la France*, xxi, 653.

<sup>2</sup> *Confessions*, bk viii, ch. 2.

has already." The days wore on, and conscience asked him whether this Christ whom he delayed publicly to acknowledge would recognize him at the Last Day; finally, therefore, he accepted what Clough's fastidious Oxford scholar calls "the horrible pleasure of pleasing inferior people," and bowed before the baptizing priest, while a crowd in which he was perhaps the only "scholar" and "gentleman" hailed his conversion with jubilant shouts of *Victorinus, Victorinus!* The man had at last done public homage to that which had impressed itself upon him as truth; there was his victory. From every other point of view it was (as Augustine writes) a fall from Babylonian dignity: the fall of a cedar of Lebanon.

In that, one of the most significant of early convert-stories, we have the exact opposite of many modern conceptions. Count Joseph de Maistre strove to herd men into his particular fold by the very argument which would have kept Victorinus in life-long paganism: "Je ne vous dis qu'un mot; l'irréligion est *canaille*." Others threaten to brand us as Philistines in art; yet all great artists, while drawing their inspiration freely from the past, have thought in religion for themselves; the Liberal may here take as much encouragement from Morris and Ruskin as from Bernard and Francis<sup>1</sup>. It would be a dear bargain to sell our souls even for French Gothic art of the thirteenth century, let alone American Gothic of today. If on this account only we hark back to the Middle Ages, then are we of all men most gullible. The true artist will seek inspiration everywhere, but he will not mix these things up with religion; he will follow the judgement of his eye, but without trying to persuade him-

<sup>1</sup> The Franciscan Alvarez Pelayo, in his *De Planctu Ecclesiae* (1335-40), brands this itching of his brother-friars for beautiful churches as a sort of paganism, and appeals to Bernard and Francis for confirmation (lib. II, art. 76, ed. 1517, f. 251 b; cf. 257 b, where he bluntly says that Religious build such churches partly for worldly gain, as a bait for the offerings of the faithful). Compare Ruskin's words in *Lectures on Art*, II, §§ 39, 41, and what he says of the "danger of Artistical Pharisaism" in religion (*Mod. Painters*, pt IV, ch. iv, § 24): "To be proud of birth, of place, of wit, of bodily beauty, is comparatively innocent. . . But to be proud of our sanctities, to pour contempt upon our fellows, because, forsooth, we like to look at Madonnas in bowers of roses better than at plain pictures of plain things! etc., etc." Let us enjoy and reverence all good art, like all other good things; but let us not desecrate art by confusing it with our particular religious preferences, or debase religion by making it dependent on our preferences in art.

self that he is therein a truer Christian. To those who would tell us (with Joseph de Maistre) that liberalism in religion is *canaille*, or (with these modern prophets) that it is artistically philistine, we may answer in George Herbert's words, with the change of only two syllables:

Lust and wine plead a pleasure; avarice, gain;  
But the cheap *Aesthete* through his open sluice  
Lets his soul run for nought.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE MASS (CONTINUED)

BUT, however we may judge of the Mass in world-history, in medieval history it has certainly supreme importance; and for this, as for many of the most characteristic developments of that age, we may find the causes or the symptoms in monasticism. The Mass, as distinct from the primitive Eucharist, was mainly a monastic creation; or rather, an evolution concurrent with monastic evolution. We may almost say that Christ made the Last Supper, and monks made the Mass. Of a few among the greatest monks, this would not be true; St Benedict and St Francis, as we shall see, almost scandalize some of their modern admirers by their comparative indifference to the multiplication of Masses; the friars, again, by their revival of preaching, did something to redress the balance. Humbert de Romans, one of the greatest of the Dominican Ministers General, pointed out that "Christ once only heard Mass; there is no evidence of His having confessed; but He laid great stress on prayer and preaching, especially preaching"<sup>1</sup>. St Bernardino, one of the greatest names in Franciscan history, said to the people:

If thou canst do only one of these two things, hear the Mass or hear a sermon, thou shouldst rather leave the Mass than the preaching, for the reason is herein expressed, that there is not so much risk to thy soul in not hearing the Mass as in not hearing the sermon.

The English friar who, about this same time, wrote the dialogue called *Dives and Pauper*<sup>2</sup>, says:

It is more profitable to hear God's word in preaching, than to hear any Mass; and rather a man should forbear his Mass than his sermon. For by preaching folk be stirred to contrition, and to forsake

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by A. G. Little, *Studies*, p. 133, n. 3, from *Maxima Bibliotheca Vet. Patrum*, xxv, 426; compare St Bernardino, *Prediche Volgari* (Siena, 1880), I, 66.

<sup>2</sup> See Mr H. G. Richardson in *Notes and Queries*, eleventh series, IV, 321. He shows that the author was writing the book at least as early as 1405, though it was possibly not completed in 1409. Mr Richardson's discovery is of extreme value, since it puts in his true setting a witness who had hitherto been regarded as writing only a few years before the Reformation.

sin and the fiend, and to love God and goodness, and be illumined to know their God, and virtues from vices, truth from falsehood, and to forsake errors and heresies. By the Mass be they not so; but, if they come to Mass in sin they go away in sin, and shrews they come and shrews they wend. And also the virtue of the Mass standeth principally in true belief of the Mass, and specially of Christ that is there sacred in the Host. But that may men learn by preaching of God's word and not by hearing of Mass<sup>1</sup>.

These utterances, of course, are exceptional; they go a little way beyond the Canon Law; they come from professional preachers, only too conscious of the indifference bred by multiplication of church services in a language which the people did not understand, and fighting in the forefront of that movement of the later Middle Ages which strove to ensure that the Catholic layman should at least hear four sermons a year<sup>2</sup>. If men had counted by saints alone on either side, Protestants and Catholics could scarcely have abused each other reciprocally as *Mass-holy* or as knowing nothing but *la prêche*; yet, among the rank and

<sup>1</sup> Com. v, ch. x, col. 2. It is characteristic of the difficulties into which modern Roman Catholics are frequently brought by their habit of reading their ideas of the present day back into the Middle Ages, that Cardinal Gasquet feels bound to distort this text in order to avoid shocking his co-religionists. In his *Monastic Life in the Middle Ages* (1922, p. 83) he writes: "It will be unnecessary, of course, to remark that the author is not here speaking of the Mass of obligation on Sundays and festivals, but of voluntary attendance at Masses of devotion." In order to make this footnote credible, he has altered the text from *any Mass* to *a Mass*. Not only is this a plain falsification of the author's words, but it also displays ignorance of the fact that the whole passage is founded on a text in Canon Law (Gratian, *Decretum*, pt II, c. i, q. 1, § 94). There St Austin (not *Anselm*, as the Cardinal misreads) is quoted as saying: "Ye should certainly say that the Word of God is no less a thing than the Body of Christ...he will be no less guilty who hath listened negligently to the Word of God, than he who by his negligence hath suffered Christ's Body to fall to the ground." Upon which the gloss notes: "This text saith that we must listen with equal diligence to Christ's words, lest they fall from our heart; even as it bringeth a man to more compunction, so that all his sins are taken away thereby; whereas through Christ's Body only venial sins are taken away." The text, like many others in Canon Law, is probably wrongly attributed to Augustine; it is more probably by Caesarius of Arles. See P.L. vol. 39, col. 2319.

<sup>2</sup> See my *Med. Studies*, no. 7, *Religious Education before the Reformation*. Even at the present day, during High Mass at cathedrals like Laon, Sens, and Dijon, very few of the congregation show either in word or in action that they recognize the Creed or the Lord's Prayer when the priest comes to them. There is a little more recognition of these things in Swiss village churches; and a good deal more among the highly exceptional congregation of Notre-Dame at Paris.



file, these two phrases do mark great cleavage<sup>1</sup>. The comparatively unsacerdotal simplicity of Benedict and Francis soon died out among their followers; vast Mass-obligations were pressed upon Religious of all rules by a society which believed in the vicarious virtues of that sacrament; action and reaction between giver and taker increased steadily so long as monasticism was a growing force. Side by side with their other activities, the monasteries became great Mass-machines; altars were multiplied in their churches; priesthood, from being highly exceptional, became the normal and almost exceptionless rule among monks and friars<sup>2</sup>; even so, they had ceased long before the Dissolution to celebrate all the Masses to which they were pledged for value received. For this had become such a matter-of-course bargain between the World and the Cloister that we need not wonder if simple-minded lay folk saw it mainly in its more selfish aspects on either side; Jacques de Vitry tells us of

a certain Knight, who never heard the truth in preaching nor was

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 14.

<sup>2</sup> At St-Gall, in 895, there were only 42 priests among 101 (or 105?) monks (Ildefons v. Arx. I, 127, 177; Montalembert, in the fourth chapter of the eighteenth book of his *Moines d'Occident*, while professedly quoting from v. Arx, makes a great hash of his figures). At St-Denis, about 840 A.D., there were 33 priests among 120 monks (Félibien, p. 79). In earlier catalogues, the priests form even smaller proportions. In 1078 and 1100, two councils had to take measures against the numbers of abbots who were not in priests' orders. (Mabillon, *Annales*, VI, 119, 389.) But Mass-obligations gradually grew beyond the powers, or at least the will, of the priest-monks; at Bury St Edmunds, for instance, in about 1280, the 80 monks employed, side by side with 111 lay servants, eleven chaplains to help with the Masses. In 1311, the Ecumenical Council of Vienne decreed that every monk (failing valid excuse) should take priest's orders when required by his superior (*Clementin.* lib. III, tit. x, cap. 1). St Francis's attempts to keep his brethren within reasonable limits were not successful. In a letter of 1224 to the General Chapter, he wrote: "I warn you also, and exhort you in the Lord, that in the places where the brethren dwell there may be only one Mass celebrated each day according to the form of Holy Church" (Böhmer, p. 60). This plain prohibition was so soon disregarded that the Quaracchi editors try to explain it away altogether (*Franc. Opusc.* p. 104); but their explanation is in flat contradiction with that of Bartholomew of Pisa, who explicitly says that St Francis wrote these words in order "that Masses should not be multiplied in the convents, but one only should be said" (*Conform.* XII, pars II; *Ana. Fra.* IV, 493). Only a century after the Saint's death, the distinguished Franciscan Alvarez Pelayo explained the words in the same way, and added that Francis had written them in the spirit of prophecy, "foreseeing that the brethren would seek to justify themselves through Masses, and to reduce them to a matter of gain, as we see is done to-day" (*De Planct. Eccl.* I. II, art. v, f. 92 a).

well instructed in the faith; when he was asked why he loved not to hear the Mass, which is of such dignity and virtue that Christ and His angels always come to it, he answered in all simplicity: "I knew not that; but I thought the priests did their Masses for the sake of the offerings." Then, when he had heard the truth, he began thenceforth to hear Mass willingly and devoutly<sup>1</sup>.

It can scarcely be doubted that the monks, however much they materialized the Eucharist, were less materialistic than the lay folk of their day; something real was gained by drawing men's minds to any sort of abstract thought; and, to the very last, monasticism never lacked this influence altogether. Sir Thomas More, in his *Supplication of Poor Souls*, has very little to say of the great social services which modern writers often attribute to the monks of that day; he emphasizes mainly the enormous number of Masses which would be lost to souls in Purgatory through the Dissolution. And we may apply very truly to the best monasteries of the twelfth century, and with some real truth to a small minority of Religious even in the sixteenth, those striking lines in which Verhaeren describes monastic devotion to the Host:

Vers une hostie énorme, au fond d'un large chœur,  
 Dans un temple bâti sur des schistes qui pendent,  
 Voici dix-huit cents ans que les moines ascendent  
 Et jettent vers le Christ tout le sang de leur cœur.

\* \* \* \* \*

Et tous s'en vont ainsi, vêtus de larges voiles,  
 Comme des marbres blancs qui marcheraient la nuit,  
 Qu'il fasse aurore ou soir, une clarté les suit  
 Et sur leur front grandi s'arrêtent les étoiles.

Et parvenus au temple ouvrant pour eux son chœur,  
 Sous un recourbement d'ogives colossales,  
 Ils tombent à genoux sur la froideur des dalles  
 Et jettent vers leur Dieu tout le sang de leur cœur.

Le sang frappe l'autel et sur terre s'épanche,  
 Il rougit la splendeur des murs éblouissants,  
 Mais, quoi qu'ils aient souffert depuis dix-huit cents ans,  
 L'hostie est demeurée implacablement blanche<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Exempla*, p. 62. Popes and Synods attempted throughout the Middle Ages to sever the fatal nexus between Masses and money, but never with lasting success. We have seen what Giraldus thought of this (*Gem. Ecc.* pp. 130-138).

<sup>2</sup> *Poèmes—Les Flamandes, Les Moines, Les Bords de la Route* (Mercure de France, 1913), p. 81.

We shall trace, in later chapters of this book, the decay of that high liturgic ideal; here, we need only notice briefly its reaction on society. Monasticism began to lose its life, and inferior monks made inferior Masses; common-sense persisted in drawing that conclusion, in spite of the efforts of the Church to avoid any scandal which would lower their prestige. Gregory VII had, for a moment, tried to crush the concubinary priests by forbidding attendance at their Masses. This policy was soon abandoned, when it became evident that such a prohibition would not separate the priests from their concubines but the laity from their churches. Two centuries later, the *Gesta Romanorum* teaches the other extreme; a parishioner doubts the efficacy of his unchaste priest's Masses, and is converted by an angel in the shape of an old man, who shows him how a spring of sweetest water, when traced to its source, is found to well up from between the grinning jaws of a dead and rotting dog! (Tale No. 12). Better authorities taught, more naturally, that the efficacy of the sacrament could not fail to be affected to some extent by the qualities of its ministrant; and the general lay conscience went far more strongly in that direction<sup>1</sup>. William of Malmesbury, celebrating the peculiar virtues of the nuns of Shaftesbury in his own day, is inclined to agree with "those persons who say that the world, which has long tottered with the weight of its sins, is entirely supported by their prayers"<sup>2</sup>. Common-sense extended that principle, and followed the argument in both directions; in proportion as exceptional goodness commanded exceptional attention from God, in that same proportion would tepidity in prayer leave God cold to the petition. Men who knew too well the personal unworthiness of their own parish priest or chaplain were certain to prefer monastic Masses, since here at least the majority of the celebrants would be clear of such suspicions. It is with the decay of the monasteries that the golden age of private chantries and Mass-priests begins. In the thirteenth century, large donations to the abbeys were beginning to fall off; donors no longer enlarged so eloquently upon the great and immediate benefits to their souls; monastic complaints of unpopularity or neglect became more frequent.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 16. *Good and Bad Masses*.

<sup>2</sup> *Chronicle*, bk 11, ch. 9, *ad fin.*

Many parallels could be found to the tale which Matthew Paris tells with such bitter emphasis, of Ralph Cheinduit, who had forsworn himself and cheated the abbey and even struck a monk:

When we sued him strictly for that matter, he said one day in the royal palace of Westminster, with a derisive laugh, "These monks of St Albans have excommunicated me so sore, that I am grown so fat and big, I can scarce find room in my saddle." For he was as plethoric and robust as a bull, all compact of power and strength<sup>1</sup>.

Those who now laughed at the monk's curses set less store upon his prayers than of old; the large majority of later medieval Mass-foundations are no longer in monastic but in parochial churches or chapels. Founders frequently prescribed that the chantry-priest should be of good fame and conversation; in Germany, it was not uncommon to add a clause of disendowment or fine in case the priest were found to neglect his Masses<sup>2</sup>. The growing indifference to later monasticism sprang largely from the known or suspected neglect of Masses and psalmody in Religious houses. And, quite apart from this shifting of the centre of gravity, the Mass in general suffered from the almost hysterical emphasis of the zealous faithful; these tales of violent thaumaturgy constantly testify to an under-current of indifference or conscious revolt; revivalist enthusiasm was followed by proportionate reaction. All contemporary evidence points to such a general irreverence as still survives in Italy; kings and magistrates habitually transacted business in church during Mass; many of the congregation came in shortly before the Elevation, gazed a moment, and then left without waiting for the rest of the service; "they hurry forth," said St Bernardino, "as if they had just seen not Christ, but the Devil." Much of this followed inevitably from the attempt to give greater solemnity to the sacrament by retaining it in a language unintelligible to the multitude—a language in which St Francis himself, at the time of his conversion, could follow the Gospel only "after a fashion." The monk, even more than the rest of the clergy, was responsible for this conservatism which made the Eucharist rather a fetish

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Major*, R.S. iv, 262; Walsingham, *Gest. Abb.* R.S. i, 319. On his deathbed, Ralph repented and made amends.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, 1922, p. 201, and *Zeitschrift f. d. Gesch. d. Oberrheins*, 1875, vol. 27, p. 255.

than a matter of reasonable belief. There never has been an age or a country in which the majority of the population have both understood the Mass and believed actively in it<sup>1</sup>.

If such a judgement may seem to savour too much of modern anti-ecclesiastical prejudice, let us listen to three out of many illustrious witnesses from the Middle Ages. St Odo of Cluny only voiced what had been hinted by others long before the tenth century when he complained that real devotion had decreased in proportion with the multiplication of Masses (P.L. 133, cols. 572, 577):

This mystery was not so often celebrated in the earliest Church as now; yet it was the more religious, the more infrequent. . . Now, it is celebrated far, far more often, but (sad to say) it is more negligently repeated; a negligence which may plainly be read in the very look of our churches and the altar-vessels and cloths and in all other things pertaining to divine service. I need not name these things one by one; we see plainly enough what is the chief care of the priests, their own good or that of their altars. But, seeing that charity (which is the fulfilment of the Law) is now growing altogether and utterly cold, how doth such a frequency of sacrificing continue, except that the devil doth oppose the sacrificing [ministers] in that

<sup>1</sup> I have given references for most of these statements in *From St Francis to Dante* (chapter xxii and notes) and *Medieval Studies*, no. 8. For business during Mass it may be well to give three further instances here. In Strassburg Cathedral, the Bürgermeister's pew was a recognized business-office for town affairs during Mass (L. Dacheux, *Jean Geiler*, 1876, p. 67). The *Chronicon de Bello* (ed. 1846, pp. 73 ff.) tells us how the abbot of Westminster came up to the altar where Henry II was hearing Mass, got verbal confirmation of a charter, summoned the Chancellor to seal it then and there, and listened to the bishop of Chichester, who came to protest against the charter as an infringement of the liberties of his See. By this time the priest was nearing the end of the Canon of the Mass, well past the Consecration and Elevation; and Henry, realizing what a complicated dispute he was undertaking to settle, prorogued the hearing. Lastly, even a saint like Hugh of Lincoln did not hesitate to come and address the king, during Mass, on business which might easily have waited (*Magna Vita*, R.S. p. 251). One of the important matters of reform for which Bishop Guillaume Durand pleaded in his memorial to the Ecumenical Council of Vienne (1311) was that the congregation should be compelled to stay out the whole of Mass, a rule which "is not kept, in many [*plurisque*] churches and monasteries even by clerics and ecclesiastics, who, while the solemnities of Mass are being celebrated, walk about in and out of church, talking with men and women, or returning without cause to their own homes. It would seem necessary to see to this, since from such behaviour there oftentimes ensues peril to souls, and devotion grows cool, and the church services are despised; and sometimes, even in Cathedrals, the bishops and other celebrants are left [to finish Mass] almost alone." (*De Mod.* etc. pt II, tit. b, p. 162.)

matter wherein he knoweth them to be most vexed? even as he hindered not Judas from taking the Eucharist. For he knoweth that, even as his fraud is repressed by the devout who take their part in this mystery, so he hath the more freedom of assault upon all who take that sacrament unworthily. . . In these days of ours, I grieve to say it, we do so mock that most holy mystery in our contempt, as though there were no Father in heaven to seek and judge the honour of His Son.

Two centuries after St Odo, the famous Petrus Cantor was precentor of Notre-Dame at Paris; he refused the bishoprics of Paris and Tournai, and died in 1197. In his *Verbum Abbreviatum*, he is bitterly eloquent as to the part played by money in the church services and sacraments (ch. xxvi-xxix)<sup>1</sup>. Where the Chapter deducts a certain sum for the canons' non-attendance at service, you may see them running up at the last moment,

like old women after a greased pig; some bent forward, others leaping over the bar to enter, others pressing in disorderly fashion through the great door. . . For the baseness of which filthy lucre, a certain layman besought a cleric of his acquaintance not to be present at that service, for very shame!

Simony is rampant everywhere, but especially in the Eucharist; priests sell the same Mass over and over again, under a thin disguise of legality<sup>2</sup>:

and, what is worse, these offerings go to the erection of altars, the adorning of holy places, and the building of monasteries. . . We sell Christ more basely than Judas did, in so far that we are worse than he; for he, when his family was in want, sold One whom he believed to be a mere man; but we sell One whom we know to be both God and man; he for thirty pieces of silver, but we for a penny or any vile price. Moreover, he repented (though not truly) and brought back the thirty pieces and cast them down; but there is no man among us in the Church who casteth away his filthy gains. Lastly, those pieces, as the price of blood, were not put into the treasury; but in our days, from these base offerings and gains, altars are erected and churches and the like are built. . . Those who say two Masses a day [for money] crucify Christ afresh.

This multiplication of Masses has come from cupidity and

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 205, col. 97 ff.

<sup>2</sup> "Seven or eight times a day," col. 104; cf. Giralduus, *Gem. Eccl.* pp. 137 ff. and *Sum. Angel.*, *Missa*, § 48.

venality: Christ was once sacrificed for all mankind, and one daily Mass is enough for a priest:

If too assiduous preaching is not fruitful, but groweth vile, how much more doth this sacrament become vile when it is repeated on the same day, and how much more doth it turn to weariness and loss of devotion! In olden days the Lord's word was the more precious for being rarer; so also was the Eucharist; but now it hath become vile for that it is so often repeated.

The Carthusians, the strictest of monks, hear Mass (he says) only on Sundays and holy days: in other monasteries, cupidity sometimes compels the subordinate parish-priest to celebrate twice a day<sup>1</sup>:

I believe there is but one way of expelling this manifold disease from the Church; that we should have but few churches, few altars in those churches, few ordinands, and those carefully chosen, [and equal care in promotion]. And the supreme remedy, considered by Gregory VIII, would be to forbid all offerings except thrice a year, at Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide [with a few other exceptions]. See how, in all Israel, there was but one temple and one tabernacle, and one altar of offering in the open court of the temple. . . Therefore, after the example of this one temple, there should be but one church in each city; or a few more if it were populous, yet all these under the great church<sup>2</sup>.

To the Carthusians, Giraldu added the Cistercians, who also did all they could, in their earlier and purer days, to restrict the multiplication of Masses<sup>3</sup>.

Our next witness comes almost half-way between Petrus and the Dissolution. Alvarez Pelayo (Alvarus Pelagius) was a very distinguished Franciscan and Papal Penitentiary; his *De Planctu*

<sup>1</sup> This is verbally copied by (or, less likely, taken from) Peter's contemporary Giraldu Cambrensis (*Gemma Ecclesiastica*, pp. 126 ff.). A few years later, in 1217, the Synod of Salisbury fulminated against these venal Masses (§ 15); but they grew only more numerous as time went on.

<sup>2</sup> Peter has here strikingly anticipated the suggestions of Sir Thomas More (*Utopia*, bk II, *Of the Religious*: ed. Lumby, 1879, pp. 151 ff.). Other medieval witnesses against the multiplication of Masses may be found cited by J. B. Thiers in his *Traité des Superstitions*, 1777, III, 71 ff. The book was first published in 1679; Thiers, who was a distinguished French priest, asserted that the abuses were equally bad in his day: "Those who sing such Masses have no other God than God Testoon, as M. Bourdoise says." For this question of Masses and money see also H. C. Lea, *Auric. Confess. and Indulgences*, III (1896), 327 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Gem. Eccles.* p. 284.

*Ecclesiae* contains one of the strongest and most detailed of extant pleas in favour of papal authority, both in secular and in ecclesiastical matters. Writing between 1335 and 1340, he scourges that traffic in Masses which was destined only to increase as time went on<sup>1</sup>:

Jeremiah saith, "The Lord hath cast off His altar," that is, the carnal altar, on account of those who offer thereon in ungodly wise, offering sacrifices that take not away sin, on which altar the Son of God is trodden under foot, and the sanctifying blood of the testament is considered unclean, and Christ is crucified again (Heb. vi, 6, x, 29). For this Church of ours is full and overfull of altars and Masses and sacrifices; but withal it is filled also, among those who sacrifice, with homicides and sacrileges, uncleanness and simony and other wickednesses, with excommunications and irregularities, even to the very brim. But the Lord God regardeth not the greatness and multitude of the sacrifices, nor their gilded ornaments, nor their singers that mollify their throat and gullet with ointment, like tragedians, that they may sing the better; but rather He judgeth the merits and causes of those that offer. Not that this matter of the Body of Christ is evil; nay, it is the best of all oblations; but the evil man receiveth it ill. For, in these days, so many Masses are said either for gain, or as a matter of custom, or for favour of man, or to cloke wickedness, or for the man's own justification, that the holy Body of the Lord is now esteemed vile among clergy and laity. Wherefore also St Francis willed that, in each convent, the brethren should be content with a single Mass<sup>2</sup>; for he foresaw that the brethren would seek to justify themselves through Masses, and to bring them to a matter of earthly gain, as we see in these present days. And today Christian folk say literally, "Our soul is dry; our eyes behold nothing else but manna" (Numbers xi, 6). Therefore hath the Lord cast off His altar, when He layeth compulsion upon priests that sacrifice unworthily and that communicate in wickedness. The devils make now as it were a solemn sport of us, mocking at our sabbaths (Lam. i, 7). . . In these days, from the time when avarice grew in the churches even as in the Roman Empire, the law is no more among the priests, and the prophets have no vision (Lam. ii, 9). The spirit of prophecy hath literally failed in the Church of today, and that word is fulfilled "I will go forth, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets" (3 Kings xxii, 22). Dreamers prophesy in these days, and base women [*mulierculae*], who are not sent of

<sup>1</sup> Lib. II, c. v (ed. 1517, fol. xcii a); I omit a few of the Biblical and other quotations with which Alvarez reinforces his arguments.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist. ad Cap. General*, § 3. This rule (said St Francis) must be observed even when there is more than one priest-friar in the convent.



the Lord... For nowadays the aim of knowledge hath perished for the most part both among lay folk and clerics and Religious; they are fixed to the earth, for they learn in order that they may get honours and earthly things.

It has recently been protested that the present generation judges medieval Christianity, or the modern creed which derives most nearly from it, by a false and shifting standard; that the general public blames it at one moment as "too logical," at another as "unreasonable," in order to secure its condemnation on one at least of these two opposite counts. But there is no real contradiction here. We impute unreason to it in so far as it assumes axioms which the rest of mankind dispute, thus begging two-thirds, or perhaps ninety-nine hundredths, of the questions which most deeply divide human opinion<sup>1</sup>. Upon the axioms thus taken for granted it builds with rigorous and meticulous logic; and the same public which finds fault with the insecure foundations has also every right to regard this rigid superstructure, under the circumstances, as superfluously elaborate. The orthodox himself would not shrink from committing this injustice, if injustice it were, in his criticism of medieval alchemy; most modern Catholics are quite as impatient of the alchemist's hasty assumptions as they are of the tedious logical elaboration with which those assumptions were spun out; there is no divergence here between Catholic and Protestant. Modern students, therefore, whether right or wrong in their own interpretation of the text, may at least criticize the dogmatic spirit which assumed as indisputable that Christ's words of institution convey a literal statement of fact, in the physical no less than in the spiritual sphere; and they have an equal right to regard all over-refined deductions from that dogmatic axiom as otiose, unedifying, and misleading. Moreover, this double condemnation may come quite fairly from men who believe unfeignedly in the Real Presence, or even in Transubstantiation. We walk by faith (they

<sup>1</sup> This is nowhere better exemplified than in that claim which formed at once the strength and the weakness of medieval religion—that others could only *opine*, while the orthodox *knew*. A modern writer has attempted to stake out this claim even in the domain of history: the Catholic student "does not grope at it from without, he understands it from within... He is not relatively right in his blame; he is absolutely right" (H. Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, ch. i); cf. p. 35 of my *Roman Cath. Ch. and the Bible*, 2nd edn.

may truly say) and not by sight; the truth of such things may be felt in the soul, but we cannot argue from them as from geometrical axioms, and our logic-chopping does but dishonour them. That, in effect, was St Bernard's position as against Abailard; far deeper than any disagreement of detail between these two men lay the deeper disagreement as to whether human reason was competent to deal with revealed truth. The medieval public, in the long run, quietly took Abailard's side here against the saint. Peter Lombard, Abailard's pupil, compiled his *Sentences* after the model of Abailard's *Sic et Non*; that *Book of Sentences* became the foundation-stone of scholastic philosophy, and Aquinas earned not only his literary crown but his formal canonization by devoting his life to ratiocinations which St Bernard would have deplored. It was in dialectic that the great medieval philosophers lived and moved and had their being; so that a modern Catholic writer can assert: "The natural theology of our schools is based frankly and wholly on the appeal to reason"<sup>1</sup>. But we shall misread the real facts unless we recognize that most of this reasoning was based upon fundamental axioms which were assumed without adequate proof. Roger Bacon judged the work of his contemporary Aquinas from a point of view which is startlingly modern. All this imposing structure (he said) rests upon a foundation of sand: upon a Bible often misunderstood even where the text itself is not corrupt<sup>2</sup>; upon an Aristotle misunderstood or corrupt; upon an almost total neglect of the mathematical and physical sciences<sup>3</sup>. This it was which made scholastic philosophy into something of a Frankenstein-monster. Its limbs, its articulations, were of vigorous regularity. Its creators were excellent in their intentions; for all strove in theory, and most strove in fact, to smooth men's path towards salvation, as salvation was

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, 1919, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> This unpardonable neglect of the Vulgate text, and its fatal consequences, are fully admitted by Father Denifle, the greatest modern authority on the subject in the Roman Catholic Church (A.L.K. G. IV, 291, 294-5). S. Berger, on pp. 3 ff. of his *Histoire de la Vulgate en France* (1887), concludes that "the Vulgate, even at the present moment, is the worst published and least known book in Latin literature." I have dealt with this more fully in *The Hibbert Journal*, for Jan. 1921, pp. 328-9, and in a later pamphlet, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Bible* (Simpkin Marshall and Co., 1921).

<sup>3</sup> *Opus Tertium*, R.S. pp. 92 ff.

then conceived. But the personal piety of these men could not fully animate the machine; it lacked the spontaneous fulness either of Plato's religious soul, or of Aristotle's soul of science. And it dug its own grave; from the earliest days it developed many heterodoxies which nothing but vigilant persecution and physical violence could kill or drive underground. It is fatal to ignore these factors in medieval thought, and to treat the revolt of reason as something which began only with the Renaissance. Moreover, such blindness is unjust to the medieval mind, and to the very party in whose favour we might seem to be shutting our eyes. The best believers then, and the best believers now, believe not indeed against reason, but without reason, in the ordinary formal sense of that word. Those who most carefully study such men's actual lives are least inclined to sneer at their beliefs. The frank claim to be in direct communion with the Unseen, and the good life which bears out that claim, move in a sphere apart from formal logic; and I have tried to write nothing here which could encourage irreverence towards the spiritual conception of the Eucharist: neither Quaker nor Catholic can claim a monopoly of worship in spirit and in truth. It is not the spiritualism of the medieval creed, but its materialism, that lends itself to serious attack; and a world which still retains its passionate reverence for quiet faith has grown justly intolerant of all false claims to reason in domains which belong more properly to intuition, and wherein discursive reason must, at best, take a subordinate place. The soul asserts nowadays, as emphatically as it ever asserted before, its right to live its own life in a universe where discursive reason is only a single factor; and this chapter may fitly end with the words of two modern writers, a non-Catholic and a Catholic, who have insisted on thinking for themselves. Samuel Butler writes:

Disbelieve as we may the details of the accounts which record the growth of the Christian religion, yet a great part of Christian teaching will remain as true as though we accepted the details. We cannot serve God and Mammon; strait is the way and narrow is the gate which leads to what those who live by faith hold to be best worth having; and there is no way of saying this better than the Bible has done<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *The Way of All Flesh* (1903), p. 86.

Read, side by side with this, the words of an equally Bohemian Frenchman who found in one side of Catholicism, at any rate, some refuge from those sordid vulgarities which have oppressed every generation of mankind. He is writing of medieval Latin:

Ce latin, méprisamment connu sous le nom de latin d'église, est, nous semble-t-il, un peu plus attirant que celui d'Horace, et l'âme de ces ascètes plus riche d'idéalité que celle du vieux podagre égoïste et sournois. Seule, que l'on soit croyant ou non, seule la littérature mystique convient à notre immense fatigue; et pour nous qui ne prévoyons qu'un au-delà de misères de plus en plus sûrement, de plus en plus rapidement réalisé, nous voulons nous borner à la connaissance de nous-mêmes et des obscurs rêves, divins ou sataniques, qui se donnent rendez-vous en nos âmes de jadis... Cette langue rigoureusement neuve, le texte latin de la Vulgate la contient toute et c'est là que vinrent, l'un après l'autre, puiser tous les écrivains mystiques,—et cette langue est au latin classique ce que Notre-Dame est au Parthénon, ce qu'un poème de pierres et de larmes est à une ode de Pindare, ce que le Calvaire est aux jeux pythiques, ce que Marie est à Diane<sup>1</sup>.

There is deep truth in these words as the expression of a temperament; and Huysmans's writings have the same temperamental truth, despite the crude ignorance of medieval realities which underlies his pretentious display of reading.

<sup>1</sup> Remy de Gourmont, *Le Latin Mystique*, 1892, pp. 12, 15.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MOTHER OF GOD

THE last, and perhaps the greatest, of the factors which separate medieval from the earliest Christianity on the one hand, and the majority of modern Christians on the other, is that which, in its extreme forms, must frankly be called Mariolatry. The steps by which full-blown medieval Mary-worship grew from its small beginnings may be traced from two very different points of view, in Lucius's and Beissel's elaborate monographs<sup>1</sup>. We must concern ourselves mainly here with those medieval centuries which saw the culmination and the decline of monasticism.

"Le moyen-âge," wrote Michelet, "a entièrement méprisé Dieu le Père"<sup>2</sup>; and the epigram does not contain much more exaggeration than is inherent in its brevity. Very early, Christ the Mediator becomes Christ the Judge; and another must needs be found to mediate between us and Christ, as Christ had stood between us and the Father. Jesus had taught the love of the Father; it becomes the Virgin's mission to teach the love of Christ. A very recent book expresses only half the medieval point of view, in describing Christ as the Head, His Body as the Church, and Mary as "the Neck through which the vital influx derives from the Head to the members"<sup>3</sup>. For there were medieval beliefs which went further than that, and exalted her practically

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 12. Lucius points out how "the leaders of the Church neglected, until the middle of the fifth century at earliest, to insert in the liturgical prayers used in divine service any separate honourable mention of Mary. This omission must be regarded as all the more remarkable, since it had become usual in all the churches, during the fourth century, at each celebration of the Holy Sacrifice to make special mention of the Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, and to celebrate the memory of the Martyrs or to recommend oneself to their prayers" (*Anfänge*, u.s.w. p. 471).

<sup>2</sup> Letter to George Sand in 1855 (G. Monod, *Jules Michelet* (1905), p. 375).

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in *The Times Lit. Sup.* March 24, 1921, p. 190, from *God and the Supernatural, a Catholic Statement of the Christian Faith*, by Father Cuthbert and others (1921).



THE MOTHER STEALS THE CHRIST-CHILD



into a fourth person of the Trinity<sup>1</sup>. Official religion, of course, never went so far; it was frequently explained, on the contrary, that all Mary's power came from God; that her subordination to her own Son must be complete. But the popular mind, without combating this in word, went its own different way and saw things otherwise. Here, as elsewhere, the multitude was mainly at the mercy of images and paintings—"the Poor Man's Bible"—and by far the commonest representation of Mary was with the infant Jesus in her arms. We may find only small significance in the fact that the same vulgar tradition which puts Christ's stature at 6 feet 3 inches gives five inches more to Our Lady<sup>2</sup>. But tales recorded by good churchmen for public edification give us occasional glimpses of a similar perspective in the popular mind. A monk who cannot obtain his petition from Christ threatened to complain of Him to His Mother; a woman, failing to recover her son, stole the Christ-child from Mary's lap in church, and refused to restore it until her own boy was brought back<sup>3</sup>. The good moralists explain, in both cases, that it was only of Christ's condescension that He yielded to this holy violence; but they show no dismay at the popular attitude which prompted it. In their minds, as in those of the multitude, religion was deeply tinged with feudal ideas. If we of the twentieth century are too strongly dominated by the idea of law, our forefathers were hypnotized by the ideas of privilege and personal favour.

The Church had modelled its organization on that of the Roman Empire; all through the Dark and Middle Ages, she absorbed almost or quite as much from civil society as civil society absorbed from her. This (as I have pointed out in Chapter IV), is a side of the Church and State question which has not always received sufficient attention. Wyclif's most

<sup>1</sup> The modern Sicilian marks his spade-handle and other implements with holy signs, especially with parallel strokes. "We should expect to find three strokes, for instance, in memory of the Holy Trinity which is so often in men's mouths; but instead we find *four*, concerning which the peasant says in his Sicilian dialect: 'Sunnū in Patri, in Figghiu, in Spiritu Santu e Maria santissima' [They are the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and the most Holy Mary]. So here we have no longer a Holy Trinity in question, but a Holy Quaternity." Th. Trede, *Das Heidentum i. d. Röm. Kirche*, IV, 215.

<sup>2</sup> *Reliquiae Antiquae*, I, 162 (MS. of Ed. IV's reign).

<sup>3</sup> Caes. Heist. I, 382, II, 63.



characteristic doctrine was very closely modelled on what he saw around him in feudal society<sup>1</sup>; his theory of Dominion took feudal ideas for its starting-point, and refined upon them. Less severe philosophers thought even more freely in feudal terms; here, for instance, is what the Franciscan author of the *Fasciculus Morum* tells us in about 1320:

We ought to imitate the man who has incurred the king's anger. What does he do? He goes secretly to the queen and promises a present, then to the earls and barons and does the same; then to the free men of the household, and lastly to the footmen. So when we have offended Christ, we should first go to the Queen of heaven and offer her, instead of a present, prayers, fasting, vigils, and alms; then she, like a mother, will come between thee and Christ, the father who wishes to beat us, and she will throw the cloak of mercy between the rod of punishment and us, and soften the king's anger against us. Afterwards we should go to the earls and barons, *i.e.* the apostles, and ask them to intercede for us; then to the knights and esquires, *i.e.* martyrs and confessors; then to the ladies of the Queen's Chamber, *i.e.* the women saints; and lastly to the footmen, *i.e.* to the poor, for the poor should be persuaded by gifts of alms to intercede for us to Christ<sup>2</sup>.

In all ages, religion is necessarily much at the mercy of anthropomorphic conceptions. In all ages, its official exponents are tempted to keep the multitude in hand by so liberal a use of metaphors that, presently, the metaphor grows from servant to master, and the hierarchy finds itself, willingly or unwillingly, subject to a creature of its own making. As the Church made herself intelligible to Paganism partly by speaking through pagan words or pagan shows; as she kept hold on feudal society partly by feudalizing her own hierarchical system; so in process of time her root-ideas became feudalized; until the original Christian democracy was almost buried under masses of privilege.

<sup>1</sup> See p. xxxii of R. L. Poole's preface to *De Dom. Divino* (Wyclif Soc. 1890) and also his *Illust. of the Hist. of Med. Thought*, 2nd ed. (1920), pp. 254, 261. Wyclif's ideas are all the more significant in the present context for having been borrowed from his Oxford master, Richard Fitzralph. It is worthy of remark that Wyclif, in his earlier writings at least, does not differ from his contemporaries on the question of Mary-worship. Lechler quotes from a ms. volume of his sermons; "hence, as it seems to me, it is impossible for us to be crowned [in heaven] without Mary's good offices... She was in a certain sense the cause of Christ's incarnation and passion; and, consequently, of all the world's salvation" (Tr. Lorimer, 1878, II, 122).

<sup>2</sup> An English Franciscan of about 1320, in Little, *Studies*, p. 149.

The Apocalypse exults that Christians have become, through Christ, "priests unto God and His Father" (i, 6). But the Church, which Augustine often loved to think of as the totality of God's elect—and as therefore including some whom man has not recognized as such—was gradually so narrowed in conception that it practically included only the hierarchy. Then it became further narrowed down almost to the Pope himself; if men had fully accepted and practised the absolutist theories of Innocent III he could have said even more truly than Louis XIV: "L'Etat, c'est moi"<sup>1</sup>. The disorganization and indiscipline of medieval society made so complete a bureaucracy impossible in practice; higher and lower clerics, with all their power over their subjects, were in frequent rebellion *de facto*, if only the rebellion of passive resistance, against that sovereign whom, theoretically, they could contradict in nothing. The medieval Church, therefore, never got beyond the feudal stage; everywhere we find great and petty lords of the Church, as of the State, who combine considerable power for oppression over their subjects with considerable power of resistance to the central authority; in matters of supreme importance (especially where any radical reform of the clergy was in question) the Pope often found himself as helpless against all these ecclesiastical princes as the Emperor was against all the subordinate rulers of what was called the Empire. The medieval Church—as distinguished from earlier and later forms of Christianity—was essentially feudal in practice; and feudal ideas gradually coloured its doctrines to the very marrow. Christ is the theoretically omnipotent Emperor; in word, our homage and devotion point directly to Him; but, in practice, we seldom come directly into His presence<sup>2</sup>. Towards the Lord in Heaven the medieval

<sup>1</sup> The same idea is still more definitely expressed with regard to the modern Roman Catholic Church by the late Father Figgis: "We have in fact reached a point in the history of the Church when, so far as his own communion goes, the Pope could say, *L'Eglise, c'est moi*, with far more complete truth than Louis XIV could have said it of the State" (*Churches in the Modern State*, Lecture IV, p. 150).

<sup>2</sup> I am not speaking here, of course, of the really spiritual religion of the chosen few; but I am thinking of at least nine-tenths—it might perhaps be more truly contended, ninety-nine hundredths—of the medieval population. It is a common but fatal mistake to imagine that snobbery is a modern vice. Only at exceptional times and places had a poor man the same chance as a rich man in a monastery; still rarer are the instances of low-born nuns.

*roturier* felt as Figaro felt towards the earthly *seigneur*: "persuadé qu'un Grand nous fait assez de bien quand il ne nous fait pas de mal." Under these circumstances, the conventional and most effective course was to get the favour of some intermediary: wisest of all are those who "go secretly to the queen."

The cult of the Virgin was fully systematized, we may say, by the beginning of the thirteenth century; in all churches of the first rank, and in many of the second or third, special chapels were built for her, often with an elaboration of ornament beyond all the rest of the church. The greatest monastic reforms had boasted her special patronage; it is interesting to note how the Cistercian, the Franciscan, the Dominican and the Carmelite claim, each for himself, her peculiar favours. The Cistercians, of course, were first in the field<sup>1</sup>; and St Bernard's known devotion to the Virgin carried immense weight with all finer spirits; he is often spoken of as her special champion, and Dante chooses him to sing her praises in heaven<sup>2</sup>. But Bernard, with the greatest men of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had opposed the new doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary; and later legend, on that account, held him up to the rebuke of the multitude<sup>3</sup>. Moreover the Friars, when they came, could boast a new title to heavenly favour; the Dominican *Vitae Fratrum* claims very plainly "that *our* brethren undertake greater and more arduous and more fruitful labours for souls than other Religious who are content with merely saving their own souls, and that they enjoy the Blessed Virgin's special protection"<sup>4</sup>. That protection was shown in a thousand ways, but specially in two. Good Dominicans, in heaven, nestle under the folds

Exclusive pews in church date from at least the early fourteenth century; the sub-contemporary *Life of Richard Rolle* speaks of Lady de Dalton's special courtesy in refusing to let her servants turn out this saintly stranger who was found praying in her pew. I have dealt briefly with modern figments on this subject in the eighth of my *Medieval Studies*.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Paradiso*, XXXIII, 1, translated by Chaucer in his *Second Nun's Tale*:

Thou maid and mother, daughter of thy Son,  
Thou well of mercy, sinful soul's cure, etc., etc.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. B. M. Reichert, p. 39. I quote here from Father J. P. Conway's translation (p. 24) to show that the context leaves no doubt as to the *alii religiosi, qui se singulariter salvant*. The other quotations are from *Vitae Fratrum*, pp. 8-9, 40, 45.

of the Virgin's mantle; the picture to which Browning alludes in his *Lippo Lippi* comes originally from a Cistercian legend, boldly "conveyed" by the author of the *Vitae Fratrum*. And it was the Virgin who practically founded this Order of Friars Preachers. In 1207, a man was raised from the dead, and recounted to a monk his experiences in the other world (iv, 178):

That he had seen our glorious Lady, the Virgin Mother of God, praying for mankind continually for three days and nights, on bended knees, with hands clasped and floods of tears, and pleading in these words: "Son, I thank Thee that Thou hast deigned to choose me for Thy Mother and Queen of Heaven. Yet I am also grieved to the heart that the greater number are damned of those souls for whom Thou didst suffer so many woes of poverty and baseness and austerity; wherefore I beseech Thy clemency, my Son, that Thou shouldst find yet some device for the saving of souls, lest so inestimable a price of souls should perish and Thy precious blood should be shed in vain." To these words of His gentle Mother the Son thus made answer: "Gentle Mother, what more could I or ought I to do for mankind that I have not done? Did I not send for their salvation patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, confessors and doctors of the Church? Did I not give myself to death for them? Ought I to save the sinner with the righteous, and the guilty with the good? This accordeth not with My justice, nor doth it become My majesty. Though I be merciful to the penitent, yet am I just to the reprobate. But tell me, sweet Mother, how I may do this which thou askest, and thou shalt easily obtain thy petition." Then said the Mother to her Son: "It is not for me to teach Thee, my Son; for Thou knowest all things, being the Wisdom of the Father; yet do I hope that, if Thou wilt, Thou canst yet find some remedy for this multitude on the verge of ruin." Thus did the Mother of Pity urge continually for three whole days, supplicating and replying continually to her son for sinful man. On the third day at last, with great reverence, He raised His Mother and said: "I know, sweet Mother, that souls perish for lack of preachers, having none to break unto them of the bread of Holy Scripture, or proclaim the truth unto them or open the sealed books. Wherefore, moved by thy prayers, I will send new messengers into the world, an Order of Preachers, who shall call and draw the people unto the solemn things of eternity; and then we will close the door upon all that slumber, or stay in their sins, or bear no fruit." Then did the Son make ready these Brethren in that habit which they now wear; and Mother and Son together sent them forth, giving unto them their blessing and power to preach the Kingdom of God.

The monk was so convinced by this revelation from the dead that he said to his brethren: "If no such Order arise after my death, then erase my name from your calendar, and say no prayers for me." In 1216, Dominic's Rule was ratified by the Pope, and the Friars Preachers began their course. A generation later, it was only by special intercession of the Virgin—it may almost be said, by her polite command—that Christ looked upon the affliction of the Dominicans and gave them the victory over their enemies at the University of Paris.

This legend of Mary and Christ and the Dominicans, with another to exactly the same effect, were taken into the Golden Legend from *Vitae Fratrum*; and there, next to them, stands a very similar story which had grown up meanwhile in the Franciscan Order<sup>1</sup>. It is even more anthropomorphic than the earlier Dominican version; the two saints are here set side by side, as jointly presented by Mary to Christ; hereupon is engrafted also that legend of miraculous mutual recognition between Francis and Dominic which inspired the wonderful majolica of Andrea della Robbia in the Piazza di San Marco at Florence. Later, when the strictly orthodox and conservative Dominicans had been outstripped by their more enthusiastic rivals, and were left to share with St Bernard the stigma of having fought against the Immaculate Conception, the Franciscans were looked upon as favourites, in a special sense, of the Queen of Heaven. So ran the wheel of fortune; we may find in this celestial court an echo of the intrigues and rivalries and vicissitudes of favour which trouble a court on earth. The first methodical collections of Miracles of Our Lady date from the eleventh century. One of the earliest, and certainly the most authoritative and popular, was that which goes by the name of Botho or Potho. Mussafia has proved that this man (abbot of Priefling near Regensburg) was not the author but a thirteenth century transcriber or editor of the MS. from which Pez printed<sup>2</sup>. It

<sup>1</sup> In the "Life of Dominic" (*Golden Legend*, Temple Classics, iv, 179). The Carmelites, later, claimed that Mary herself had founded their Order on Mt Carmel.

<sup>2</sup> *Sitzungsberichte d. k. Akad. in Wien (Phil. Hist. vol. 113, 1886)*, pp. 937 ff. Pez's edition was suppressed at once, not on account of Botho but because of free speech about monastic relics in the preface: even Mussafia's industry could count only eleven surviving copies, one of which is fortunately in the British Museum (*Agnetis Blannbekin Vita*, etc., ed. B. Pez, 1731). See appendix 20.

contains forty-four tales, of which the first seventeen evidently form the original collection, and the remaining twenty-seven another of nearly the same date which has been superimposed upon it. These two groups, separately or together, form the basis of practically all the later and fuller collections; most of these forty-four tales were exploited by dozens, or rather scores of later compilers, through the Middle Ages and far beyond<sup>1</sup>. They take us into a strange chapter of religious history, which the reader can easily pursue for himself in two very accessible sources: *The Golden Legend* (Caxton's translation, reprinted in *Temple Classics*) and *The Alphabet of Tales* (E.E.T.S. 1904 and 1905)<sup>2</sup>.

Mary of the Middle Ages, as Mr Adams points out, is very feminine and very much the *noble dame*; not only does her mercy temper the strictness of divine justice, but her moods and caprices redeem the formalities of classical patristic theology. The multitude has always hated not only dragooning order, which we all hate, but also the milder order which is generally necessary to progress. The actual manner of inhabitation of a workman's "model dwelling" will often be found to mark a very definite revolt against the builder's conception or the county council's regulations, partly in healthy assertion of freedom but partly also in mere love of easy disorder. Official theology, taken literally, was very ruthless; upon its fundamental doctrine of original sin an inexorably logical system was built which no serious mind could contemplate without horror, even though it were a holy horror. Not only was there that wholesale perdition of the unbaptized; not only the almost certainty of purgatory at the very best; but, even so, it was the merest fraction of baptized Christians that could hope to see final salvation, however the preachers might encourage each man to

<sup>1</sup> For aught I know, down to the present day. The latest of these collections that I have studied is that of S. Razzi, abbot of Camaldoli, printed at Florence in three books in 1576, and, with a fourth book, in 1592. This is a conscientious cento from Botho, Caesarius, Herolt and a few almost equally popular medieval sources: the tales are often abbreviated, but (so far as I have compared them) with real fidelity. For a conspectus of the main sources, see appendix 19.

<sup>2</sup> It is also very well treated, from many points of view, in the late Henry Adams's *Mont St Michel and Chartres*; for this book see appendix 21.

hope that he might be among those few<sup>1</sup>. The cult of the saints, and of Mary in especial, offered relief from this intolerable nexus of fate: the Franciscan Pelbart, in his *Pomerium Sermonum de Beata Virgine*, has a whole section entitled: *Profit No. 10.—That the blessed Mary frees men from damnation*<sup>2</sup>. In support of this he recites in full five of her most popular miracles; first, before the Judgement-Seat, she saved "a cleric given up to lechery, in whom however there was this one good thing, that he was wont to say the Hours of the Blessed Virgin with devotion." Her protection was similarly given, and for the same reason, to a notorious robber, to a woman with a sin on her conscience which she dared confess to no priest, to a youth who had, by his mother's curse, been predestined to hell from his very conception, and to Theophilus, who had made a pact with Satan and executed a charter formally renouncing his Christian profession. "From which examples," adds Pelbart, "it is manifest that this very Mother of Mercy doth not suffer sinners to perish, but that she will mercifully free from damnation those who turn unto her." As Mr Adams says of a cathedral like Chartres, dedicated specially to the worship of the Virgin, it was "like Lourdes to-day, the expression of what is in substance a separate religion" from Christianity in general<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2 c. Here, as usual, we may start from Augustine; from his genuine writings and from those commonly attributed to him. Quotations may be found in Pelbart's *Pom. Sermonum de Sanctis*, Pars Estivalis, Sermon. 83, B. Three-quarters of the world are damned as being non-Christian; among Christians, "the whole world is seated in wickedness"; "far more are damned, among the whole mass of humanity, than those who come to light."

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Hagenau, 1515, fol. 139 b (Lib. XII, pars ultima, c. 10). On fol. 62 b there is a curious calculation as to the sun's distance from the earth, the consequent rate at which he must go to compass the earth in twenty-four hours, "swifter than a stone from a bombard," and the still greater swiftness with which Mary moves, beyond all other saints, to succour those who call upon her.

<sup>3</sup> *L.c.* p. 261. Two of these five examples are also quoted in *The Golden Legend* (III, 101 and IV, 248). Even Emile Mâle, who takes such pains to justify mediæval symbolism, is obliged to admit the popular and non-theological origin of the custom of representing St Mary and St John kneeling on either side of the Christ in Judgement: "Mais je serais plus disposé à croire que les artistes... ont été guidés par un sentiment de piété tout populaire... Les théologiens avaient affirmé qu'au jour suprême nulle prière ne pourrait fléchir le Juge; mais l'humble foule des fidèles continua à espérer qu'en ce jour la Vierge et Saint Jean seraient encore de puissants intercesseurs et sauveraient plus d'une âme par leurs prières. Les artistes s'inspirèrent d'une croyance qu'ils partageaient; ils opposèrent la grâce à

The most startling of these stories, and in many ways the most picturesque, are those recording this fight between Mary and the hellish host at the final reckoning of some conspicuous sinner. The instances chosen by Pelbart are only a sample taken at random; in the first three books of Razzi's collection, seventeen tales lay stress on the fact that the culprit had no redeeming feature beyond a punctual—nay, sometimes only a perfunctory—reverence for her name and her image: "A knight of infamous life, whose castle stood by a high road, a man devoid of all respect or compassion, was wont to rob and despoil all passers-by. . . But with all this, by God's high providence, his custom was to salute the Virgin daily." If he had omitted this salutation a single day, the devil would have got him; but his regularity saved him, and the decision ran that the devil "in future, shall never be able to hurt him who calleth on the name of the glorious Mother of God"<sup>1</sup>. Another of the saved was "a great and famous robber, who never did any good in all his life, but that, by God's inspiration, he fasted one Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and had one Mass sung in order that she might vouchsafe to convert him before his death"; so also was "a woman of sin, who never did any good in the whole space of her life, but that she visited the Virgin Mary daily and saluted her with the *Ave*, and one single Saturday she caused a Mass to be sung in praise and glory of the said blessed Virgin"<sup>2</sup>. In twelve cases, Christ in His severity refuses to pardon, until the Virgin's pleas bring about a change of the Divine Mind; in three others, where direct prayers to God have failed, prayers to the Virgin are successful<sup>3</sup>.

la loi, et, au milieu du sévère appareil de la justice, firent briller une lueur d'espérance" (*L'Art religieux du xiii<sup>e</sup> Siècle*, 1902, p. 416).

<sup>1</sup> Ed. 1592, p. 18; cf. 7, 101, 102, 103, 105-8, 114, 117-20, 144, 147, 152, 157, 163. The story of the knight is in *Gold. Leg.* III, 102. St Alfonso Liguori, in the eighteenth century, tells a similar tale of a Flemish youth who, in 1604, was saved from hell by saying "some 'Hail Mary's' . . . though without devotion and half asleep" (*Glories of Mary*, tr. Mgr Weld, 1852, p. 191).

<sup>2</sup> These are no caricatures: the emphasis which seems so strange to us was, to those minds, most edifying. Here, for instance, is one of the stories in the very words in which the Dominican Herolt tells it (*Promptuarium*, c. 57): "A certain knight saluted the B.V.M. daily, when he rose and when he lay down in his bed, with an *Ave Maria*; he did no more good than this, and by the Virgin's grace he was saved—*nil boni plus fecit, et gratia Virginis salvatus est.*"

<sup>3</sup> Razzi, pp. 13, 77-9, 110, 119, 142-3, 158; cf. 44, 80, 113.



Frequent as are the appeals from Christ's decision to the Virgin, I have met only one contrary case, where Mary refused to avenge an injured wife on her adulteress, saying: "How can I do so or suffer any ill to be done to one who never lets a single day pass without kneeling a hundred times before me?" The wife was bold enough to murmur, as she went away: "Since then thou wilt not avenge me, I will turn unto thy Son with my complaint of this matter!"<sup>1</sup> A desperate sinner will deny Christ, but not Mary; there is, I think, only one of these legends in which the sinner goes to the extreme length of renouncing Mary as well as her Son<sup>2</sup>; this is that Theophilus-story which came very early from the East, and which was introduced to the West by "Botho" in the eleventh century, if not earlier. She is the special patroness of wanton monks and frail nuns; she will descend, in such cases, to downright falsehood in order to shield the sinner from public shame<sup>3</sup>. A man may assure himself of salvation more directly and mechanically by certain honours rendered to her, than by any rendered directly to God<sup>4</sup>. The devil knows this very well; when a youth has denied God and refuses still to deny Mary, the tempter insists: "for she it is who doeth us the most harm, seeing that she, through her mercy and indulgence, brings in and saves those whom her Son in His justice hath damned and given to perdition"<sup>5</sup>. This is put most vividly by the good monk Gautier de Coincy, who describes the devil's moral indignation at losing the soul of a quite indefensible and most succulent sinner:

She is more truly Lady in earth and heaven, by one degree, than God Himself. He loveth her so, and hath such faith in her, that she can neither do nor say aught that He will disavow or gainsay. She maketh him to believe whatsoever she will; if she were to say that the magpie is black, or that muddy water is as clear as crystal, then would He make answer: "My mother saith sooth!"<sup>6</sup>

And, on this point, the most hardened of earthly sinners often believes and trembles with the devil. The story of the gambling ribald is worth telling in Gautier de Coincy's own words<sup>7</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Razzi, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 142, 163.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 50, 84, 87-8, 92, 103, 110-1, 116.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 80, 109, 139.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, p. 274; cf. Lommatzsch, p. 82, note.

<sup>7</sup> Ed. Poquet, col. 159, l. 233.

A ribald, whom men took for a fool, said once an excellent word, which it is well that I should here recall. [He was dicing with another of the same kidney, and had such bad luck "that he lost all, even to his breeches"<sup>1</sup>.] *Lungs and liver!* he swore, *belly and wounds!* and everything that came into his mouth; he swore against his misfortune; oftentimes he swore disloyalty [to God]; he spared neither God nor saint; all that came into his head he tore to pieces with his tongue; only he said no villainy of our Lady St Mary, except once by mischance when he had lost a heavy stake, and cried, "Ha! for that play, may God's Mother now have a curse!" Thereupon he confessed his fault forthwith; but his fellow made mouths at him and said, "Now art thou a hypocrite monk, a wretch and a coward! God's heart!" (said this fellow) "thou hast cut God in little pieces, even as a butcher cleaveth the cow joint by joint with his axe; yet thou wilt on no account swear by His Mother's liver or heart, by her tongue or throat or gullet; thou art not worth an old shoe! No ribald is a hardy swearer who spareth either God or His Mother; by the belly of St Fiacre! since thou dost such butcher's work upon God, and hast so moved Him to wrath, wherefore shrink thus from dividing and dismembering the entrails, the joints, and the hide and all the members of His Mother?" "Ah!" cried the other, "evil thief, how poor is now thy faith in God! By the holy belt of God<sup>2</sup> . . . if I provoked Our Lady to wrath, who then would make me my peace with God?"

Yet it was not all who drew that fine distinction:

Se courroucoie Nostre Dame  
Qui me feroit ma pès a Dieu?<sup>3</sup>

The ribald's companion, it will be noted, was more indiscriminate in his blasphemy; and Cardinal Jacques de Vitry, who was Gautier's contemporary, complains that taverners suffered things to be said of the Virgin Mary and the Saints which they would not suffer to be said of their own wives (*Exempla*, p. 218). Mr Adams is certainly too sweeping in his statement that, while men disputed and doubted about the Trinity, "if skeptics there were [with regard to the B.V.M.], they kept silence." There were some (and a good many too, if we are to judge by the evidence), who neglected or depreciated or even doubted the

<sup>1</sup> For the extremities to which gamblers were sometimes reduced by dicing away their very clothes, see *Med. Garner*, pp. 291-3.

<sup>2</sup> Here follows a line which is probably corrupt, and of which Abbé Poquet offers no explanation, *Ne por l'eguiser, sainte gemme*.

<sup>3</sup> Lommatzsch, p. 254.

transcendent glories of Mary herself. Apart from these mad blasphemers, who cursed "the holy members, external and internal, of our Lord Jesus Christ... and, not content with that, dealt like measure unto the most holy members of our Lady," Razzi gives us several instances of indevotion or unbelief<sup>1</sup>; Gautier de Coincy makes similar complaints<sup>2</sup>. "Even among lettered folk" he knows men who hate to hear these Mary-miracles; who slink out of the hall or growl under their breath like mastiffs; who even say openly "that the *Miracles de Notre Dame* are no less false and fictitious" than those miracles "which beggars feign at monasteries, at wayside crosses, and at fountains." He himself gives concrete instances of sinners who have contemned the Virgin Mary: but perhaps the most interesting of these is supplied by Caesarius from his own neighbourhood and his own time<sup>3</sup>:

In the chapel of the township of Veldenz [on the Moselle] is a certain ancient image of the blessed Virgin Mary, with her Son in her lap, not indeed well formed in art, yet endowed with much virtue. A certain lady of that township, which is in the diocese of Trier, standing one day in this chapel and looking upon this image, was filled with indignation at the sculpture, and said, "Wherefore doth that old stuff stand there?"<sup>4</sup> The blessed Virgin, Mother of Mercy, not (as I think) accusing this foolish-tongued woman before her Son, but predicting to a certain other lady the penalty that should follow upon this fault, said: "Seeing that this lady (calling her by her name) hath called me *old stuff*, therefore shall she herself be wretched her whole life long." Within a few days after, the lady's own son stripped her of all her goods, movable and immovable; and she beggeth her food in great wretchedness even unto this day, as a punishment for her folly of speech.

But Mr Adams is so far right, that medieval faith clung to Mary with a loyalty beyond all other loyalties, in proportion as she seemed real beyond all other realities of faith. Thomas of

<sup>1</sup> Lommatzsch, pp. 40, 41; cf. 39, 66, 96, 131.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 45, 67, 94-7; concrete examples in Mussafia, I, 980; II, 81; III, 12, 55; Etienne de Bourbon, pp. 131, 133; Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.* VII, 104.

<sup>3</sup> *Dial. Mirac.* I. VII, c. 44; it is repeated almost in the same words by Herolt, *Exempla*, Y, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ut quid hic stat vetus haec rumbula?* = "was macht hier dies alte Gerümpel?" A tale of a worn-out Mary-statue cast out from the church, picked up and honoured by a beggar, is in Mussafia, III, 12 (fourteenth cent.); the *dénouement* is very interesting.

Cantimpré remembered to have sat, as a youth, among "certain Religious, speaking with each other of Mary in wondrous fervour of spirit." Each pitched the note higher than the last, until one with pious temerity, applauded with gushing tears, and cried, "I will speak my judgement of Mary: there is none more foolish than she among all God's creatures." We sat in dumb amazement at this word, until he continued: "Know ye not that almost all sinners, without exception, when they begin to rise from some fall, fear the God of vengeance and the Lord of the universe, and flee to His Mother as to a fount of propitiation and pity, clinging the more dearly to her as their true Reconciler. Nor need we to wonder; for she ceaseth not in her constant service and striving until she have reconciled these prodigal sons to the Father of Life. They, however, seeing this most merciful Father and His angels rejoicing over them in their repentance, do straightway almost forget their Reconciler, mingling their sweet and tender tears with their kind Father's kisses"<sup>1</sup>.

Here, and in the next paragraph, the good bishop takes care to explain God's ultimate superiority to Mary; but the very effort to explain is in itself significant; *qui s'excuse, s'accuse*. For, as we survey this literature for the last three centuries of the Middle Ages, it is difficult to see how the ordinary medieval worshipper can have avoided the conclusion that, for practical purposes, Mary mattered more to him than Christ. Vincent of Beauvais quotes with approval: "O Lady, Lady, if thou fail thy servants, who will succour his own? Nay, Lady, nay! men's hopes will be brought to naught, if they begin not to find a refuge in thee." And again, "I counsel thee to invoke, before all others, Mary the Mother of Jesus, and serve her with perpetual prayers. For she is the single hope of man's reconciliation; she is the prime cause of man's salvation"<sup>2</sup>. Scores of similar quotations might be given. A testator of 1495 bequeaths his soul "to allmyghty god my creatour Saviour and Redemer and to his mooste blessed moder Saint Mary Virgyn quene of heven Lady of the Worlde and Emporessse of Helle"<sup>3</sup>.

Queen of heaven, and Empress of hell, with all the feudal retinue that becomes her royal and imperial state! The court of Heaven was the model of earthly courts, and against earthly injustices man could appeal to these august protectors. The

<sup>1</sup> *De Apibus*, l. II, c. xxix, §§ 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Spec. Hist.* lib. VII, c. 84, 95.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to *The Tablet*, Feb. 19, 1921.

poor man's unprotectedness in the Middle Ages must not be unduly exaggerated; but in fact it was very lamentable. Quite characteristic is Jacques de Vitry's complaint:

Many say nowadays, when they are rebuked for taking the poor man's cow: "Let the boor be content that I have left him the calf, and that I suffer him to live. I could easily have done him worse harm than that; I have taken his goose, but I have left him the feathers"<sup>1</sup>.

Against this there was often no remedy on earth; but in heaven (if heaven be above us) there shall be most effectual appeal. We will have a Mother of Mercy to redress these hateful injustices; and (so great is our need) we shall lean even more upon this Mother of God than upon the God whom she bare.

If the instances already given do not redeem this last sentence from exaggeration, let me conclude with two more. The first is from Meffret, that fifteenth-century preacher who was reprinted for the edification of the orthodox even in the seventeenth century (*Hort. Reginae Fest.* p. 266, serm. 96):

In Paradise, nothing which hath life can come to death; nor need we marvel at this; for in Ireland, as we know, is an island wherein the bodies of the dead decay not; and another island wherein men cannot die; but, when they are come to extreme old-age, they have to be carried elsewhere to die. So also he who dwelleth, through hope and diligent service, in Mary, that Noble Paradise, shall doubtless live for evermore, here by the life of grace and in future by the life of glory, which She Herself doth promise to all who devoutly serve Her, saying (*Ecclesiasticus* xxiv, 31), "They that explain me, shall have life everlasting"; which text is thus expounded by Richard [of St Victor?] in his 5th Sermon, "He shall never be damned for ever who, in this present life, followeth Mary's praise and extolleth Her. O! how many have been the sinners, and how many are there yet, and shall be in future, who are and shall be saved through Mary! one by the *Salve Regina*, another by the *Ave Maria*; who otherwise should have been or should be damned to all eternity!"

My second instance is from a classical Franciscan document

<sup>1</sup> *Exempla*, p. 62; cf. *Piers Plowman*, B. iv, 47 ff. "And then came Peace into Parliament, and put forth a bill, How Wrong, against his will, had his wife taken... 'Both my pigs and my geese his gadlings fetcheth... He breaketh up my barn-door, and beareth away my wheat...' The King knew he said sooth, for Conscience him told," etc., etc. All medieval moralists pitied the fate of the medieval peasant; cf. Lommatzsch, pp. 70 ff. I am dealing more fully with this in my third volume.

which, in its present form, dates from 1379, but which contains a great deal of material taken directly from those who had known St Francis in the flesh—the *Chronicle of the Twenty-four Generals* (*Analecta Franciscana*, III, 71). It is one of a group of a dozen consecutive stories of Leo, one of the saint's most intimate companions:

Brother Leo saw once in a dream how the Last Judgement was being made ready, and the angels blew their trumpets in a meadow, and an innumerable multitude gathered round them. And behold! two ladders were set, one white and the other red, on either side of that meadow; and their length extended from earth to heaven. Then Christ was seen at the top of the red ladder, as though in grievous indignation and wrath; and near him, a little lower, was St Francis. Then St Francis came down farther and cried in a loud voice to his brethren, saying: "Come, brethren, come ye to the Lord, who calleth for you! Be of good courage and fear not!" So the brethren, at their Father's admonition, hastened and would have confidently climbed that red ladder; but, as they climbed, one fell from the third rung, another from the fourth, another from the tenth, others from the midst or from the top. Then the blessed Francis, moved with compassion for this ruin of his brethren, began to pray to the Judge for his sons. But Christ, having showed his own hands and side, wherein his wounds seemed renewed with fresh and flowing blood, said, "This is what your brethren have done unto me"<sup>1</sup>. And, while St Francis persevered in asking mercy for his sons, after a brief while he came a little down the red ladder and cried, saying: "Be of good courage, brethren! despair not, hasten to the white ladder and climb that, for there ye shall be received, and by that way ye shall come to heaven!" The brethren, at this fatherly admonition, ran to the white ladder, and behold! the blessed Virgin appeared at the top of the ladder and received them, and they entered into the kingdom of heaven without labour—*sine labore*.

The story is duly reproduced by Bartholomew of Pisa in his *Conformities*, a book solemnly approved by the General Chapter in 1399 (*Ana. Fra.* IV, 191) and was repeated even in the eighteenth century by St Alfonso Liguori, whose translator, Monsignor Weld, writes: "Remember, that [this book] has been strictly examined by the authority which is charged by God Himself to instruct you, and that that authority has declared that it contains NOTHING (*sic*) worthy of censure" (Preface,

<sup>1</sup> Leo was of the spiritual party, and therefore inclined to emphasize the backsliding of the majority after St Francis's death; see vol. II of this book.

p. xviii). Nearly two centuries earlier than this tale of Leo's, we find in the author whom Abbot Botho adopts, that "neither would the powers of hell resist her, nor the sentence of Christ her Son stand against her," when she wanted to save a sinner<sup>1</sup>. And the preamble to the charter of a gild founded at Boston in 1260 runs: "Since we cannot attain the gate of salvation without the powerful aid of the 'Star of the Sea'"<sup>2</sup>. ' .

<sup>1</sup> Chap. 40.

<sup>2</sup> H. F. Westlake, *Parish Gilds of Med. England* (London, 1919), pp. 121, 157.

## CHAPTER X

### THE GOSPEL OF MARY

IN the face of this story, and of others like it, born in the Middle Ages but repeated for the edification of generation after generation down to modern times, it must be admitted that Christ's protection, so far as the average man was concerned, was less important for practical purposes than Mary's. Among the common folk of the Middle Ages, Mariolatry grew to a fetishism which can only be realized by those who have travelled in S. Italy or Spain or S. America; and this was often actually encouraged by churchmen of reputation, whose modern equivalents in education and character would be Bishops and Monsignori and Professors at seminaries. Beissel, in spite of his natural tenderness to all traditional ideas, gives instances of this (*e.g.* pp. 475 ff.). Bible-texts were pressed into the service with an ingenious perversity exceptional even in those days; passages from pseudo-Augustine and pseudo-Jerome were quoted in corroboration; the wildest legends of the bestiary were seized upon to clinch the doctrine; and beasts which had been taken as types of Christ were now transferred to His mother. The Middle Ages thus made for themselves a new Redeemer, endowed with all the qualities that they needed most, and fashioned with every poetic liberty which the reticence of the four evangelists permitted. If the early Christians had known more about the Mother of the Lord, the medieval mind would have known far less. There grew up practically a Gospel of Mary, with all those details that are lacking in the four Gospels; and Acts of Mary, to supply all that is not said about her in Acts. That she is recorded to have spoken on only four occasions, is now extolled as one of her glories; on the other hand, men take leave to forget some things that are definitely recorded of her<sup>1</sup>. She

<sup>1</sup> Among those clerics whom she healed with her milk was one who had earned her special grace by adding always to his *Ave*, "Blessed, O Christ, is the womb that bore thee, and the paps that gave thee suck" (Vinc. Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.* vii, 84; Razzi, at the end of the sixteenth century, repeats the



is moulded to all their heart's desire, and to all the demands of their bitter necessity; she becomes all that she must needs be, if the ordinary man is to reconcile himself at all to this exacting Christian religion. Mr Adams scarcely exaggerates (p. 252): "without Mary, [medieval] man had no hope except in atheism; and for atheism the world was not ready." Therefore she played a greater part than any Greek or Roman goddess ever played. It was in vain that Satan reasoned with the youth who had already abjured God but boggled at Mary: "The Creator is greater than the Created; thou hast done the greater thing; wherefore shrink from the less?" In theology this was incontrovertible; but in sentiment it had no force: "Her, I will never deny!"<sup>1</sup> Mary insisted on the reinstatement of a priest who was so ignorant that he could sing only one Mass, that of the B.V.M., and whom the bishop had therefore suspended from his office, in spite of the man's personal piety<sup>2</sup>. It would be very difficult to find an example of similar rewards given for special devotion to the Holy Ghost; indeed, Abailard got into trouble by dedicating his monastery to the Paraclete. And we must lay still more stress on the medieval belief that Mary could actually change, by her prayers, the purposes of her Son: for, after all, the attributes of Christ are not merely those of Jupiter; the Mary of these legends bends not only the will of her Child but the actual decrees of the Trinity; and, to find an analogy to this in ancient times, we must imagine Juno swaying the decisions of the whole Pantheon. Thomas of Cantimpré tells, as others tell, how a Cistercian monk had fallen into grievous sin and given much cause for scandal: Mary prayed to her Son for him:

But the Child, as one resisting, turned His face away. Then the Mother, for her part, transferred the Child to another part of her story without any sense of incongruity; bk 1, ch. 36). Would the cleric have earned equal favour by repeating always Christ's actual answer?—"Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

<sup>1</sup> Caes. Heist. dist. II, c. 12.

<sup>2</sup> This occurs in nearly all the collections. One of the most interesting versions is given by Cantimpratani, in whose book the misguided prelate is no other than St Thomas of Canterbury, whose haircloth *femoralia* (not shirt, as Gautier de Coincy describes, if Mr Adams reports him correctly) the Mother of Mercy had once condescended to mend with her needle (p. 539). This form of the story, with another following the commoner form, is in Caesarius (dist. VII, c. 4, 5).

arm, that she might more easily turn her face of benignity upon His face; yet again He turned away. When this had been oftentimes repeated, at last, after wondrous and pitiful instance of prayers, the Mother got the better of her Son—*evicit Mater in Filio*. . . Nor need we wonder, since Mary hath that singular privilege whereof the prophet Job writeth (ix, 33): "There is none [other] that may be able to reprove both, and to put his hand between both."

In Christ and Mary is fulfilled the fable of the Virgin taming the Unicorn; God, "sleeping nine months in her breast, was so far bent from His fierceness [*ferocitate*] and moderated in His mind, that he suffered Himself to be taken and slain by the hands of the Jews"<sup>1</sup>. The wildest embroideries on this theme were tolerated, and even encouraged; brooding monks wrote pages which it would be scarcely fair to quote without their context; and, as among the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century, the boldest often enjoyed the widest popularity.

This Empress has her Barons and Knights—Apostles and minor saints—but these defer unquestioningly to her. An Apostle may vindicate his own proper share of sacrifice as against his fellow-Apostle, but not as against Mary. St Jude struck with palsy a woman who unjustly neglected him in favour of "one of the well-known Apostles"<sup>2</sup>. But St John Baptist and St John the Evangelist pardoned two clerks who passionately preferred one to the other, in virtue of their common devotion to the Virgin. And when a faithful client of St Martin fled, during a great plague, to that Saint's church in Paris, Martin himself warned the man that this was a case beyond his medical skill, and counselled recourse to Mary. The man protested that he would rather die than leave his own St Martin; whereupon the Saint summoned sufficient strength to heal him in Mary's name<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore, for all her humility, she has a queenly sense of her queenly power. To Christ she is theoretically most humble; and yet we must remember how greatly medieval religion relied upon sensible impressions, and how far more frequent was the

<sup>1</sup> *De Apibus*, I. II, c. xxix, §§ 25-7.

<sup>2</sup> Caes. Heist. dist. VIII, c. 61; cf. c. 56; *De Apibus*, ed. 1597, p. 537.

<sup>3</sup> Mussafia, *Sitzungsberichte*, IV, 2 (twelfth century). Even Benedict could not get for his own monks what Mary could (*ibid.* I, 990; cf. St Peter, p. 938, and St John, p. 947).

statue or picture of Christ as a child in Mary's arms, than of His crowning her from His throne, or even of the Annunciation. To the sinner, again, she is often humble in yielding to his importunity. For the Saints on earth she has astounding condescensions; from St Bernard onwards she has fed them with her milk, and surrounded them with every motherly care<sup>1</sup>. But behind the tenderness of her woman's heart lurks the wrath of a queen. Only once, claims one of her panegyrists, has she wrought a miracle of stern justice rather than of mercy, when she sent St Mercurius to pierce Julian the Apostate with his lance<sup>2</sup>. Yet we have seen her vengeance on the lady who reflected on her age and personal appearance; and other parallel cases might be quoted.

On her feminine beauty all insist; and perhaps medieval art received its strongest stimulus from the constant effort to represent this type of supersensual loveliness. Far less known are the word-pictures; let us take one of the latest and most elaborate, drawn by the Franciscan Oswald Pelbart about 1475<sup>3</sup>:

Even as the blessed Mary was noblest and best in soul of all created things, so was she, as of right, excellent beyond all in perfection of body...As Aristotle saith in the second book of his Physics, like begetteth like; wherefore, unless nature err or hinder this, the child is like unto his father or mother. Seeing then that the Holy Ghost, by whom the Virgin conceived, could neither err nor be impeded in Christ's conception; therefore it followeth that, even as the body of Christ, united to His Deity, was most perfect and noble and beautiful beyond all perfections of all other bodies of men on this earth (as saith the Psalmist, "Thou art beautiful above the sons of men"), so, after Christ, was the body of His Mother. But bodily beauty consisteth chiefly in bigness, in quality of colour, and in elegant disposition of members...We ask, therefore, whether the blessed Mary was great or small of stature. To this we must answer briefly, with Albert the Great, that she had a due and proper stature, neither too great nor too small, but according to the size of a tall woman. And it is proved that her Son's body was most perfect in all natural qualities; wherefore He had the most exact stature be-

<sup>1</sup> For many forms of this milk miracle, and as full a discussion of their credibility as was possible for an orthodox Benedictine of the seventeenth century to publish, see Dom D'Achery's note to Guibert de Nogent. P.L. vol. 156, cols. 1044-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Golden Legend*, III, 15.

<sup>3</sup> *Pomerium Sermonum de B. Virgine*, pars III, art. ii, c. 1.

coming to man, neither excessive and gigantic nor too little. But with regard to his bigness, we possess that at Rome, in a certain image made of Christ's own bigness, which is eight long palms in height, or nine short. . . Since therefore there could be no error in Christ's generation from the Virgin (as hath been proved above), therefore, even as Christ was of proper height, so also was His blessed Mother. Moreover, this is in accord with the Song of Songs (vii, 6): "How beautiful art thou, and how comely, my dearest, in delights! Thy stature is like to a palm-tree." Now the palm is a very lofty tree. It will be asked, whether she was fat and full-fleshed, or spare. We must answer again, with Albert, that there was in the blessed Virgin's body a proper equality, neither too fat nor too thin. Which may thus be proved; excesses of fat or flesh are caused by coldness and humidity of temperament; even as leanness cometh from heat and dryness. Proper equality, therefore, doth proceed from the equal complexion of all humours, as physicians tell us; and such equality we must believe to have reigned in the blessed Mary's body.

Secondly, of her colour, we must ask three questions, for in men's bodies there is triple diversity of colour, in skin and hair and eyes. First, then, of her outward colour of skin. [Proof from Albert, Galen, and Chaucer's "dan Constantine" that] a hue compounded of red and white is noblest of all. . . wherefore we grant this colour to the Virgin's body. Next, of what colour was her hair? Here we must determine certain points. First, that the blessed Virgin's tresses were not altogether curled; for such come from abundant dryness of complexion. . . and signify a swelling disposition, greedy of gain; which can have no place in the blessed Virgin. The second point is that her hair was neither thin nor thick nor merely white; for such, according to [Aristotle, Avicenna, Constantine and Ptolemy] indicate a dull and indocile disposition. The third point is, she had not hair of a downright red, for this attesteth abundance of heat, and signifieth a natural leaning to unbelief. For the fourth and last point, therefore, the blessed Virgin's hair must have been moderately dark, as Albert proveth; and dan Constantine saith that it is the soundest complexion of body to have red hair in infancy, dark in boyhood and adolescence<sup>1</sup>. For comeliness, therefore, it was right that the Virgin should have had hair tending to darkness; since opposites give each other the greater force; and, granting that her skin was white to red, a certain darkness of hair would more become her, as experience plainly showeth. Moreover, dark hair is specially proper to the soundest complexion, seeing that it attesteth the expulsion

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth I will omit, without further notice, Pelbart's long demonstrations of these points from medical writers, and select only the more interesting conclusions.

of hot bile and adust blood; and, seeing that the body of the blessed Virgin was most perfect of all human limbs, therefore she had a hot and dry brain, and, by consequence, hair of a temperate inclination to blackness. Which Albertus doth reinforce by this farther example, that Veronica's Kerchief<sup>1</sup> sheweth our Lord Jesus Christ to have had black hair and beard; therefore our Lady had such hair, since there was the greatest possible likeness between Christ and His Mother; even as, in general, we see that the offspring do resemble their parents. Lastly, we see that the Jewish race, in most cases, hath black hair; of which race was our Lady; wherefore she also had such hair, yet but temperately tending to black.

Thirdly, of her eyes, what colour had they? To which Albert answereth, in briefest words, that they must have been black. First, for that black eyes go commonly with black hair. Secondly, for that this would better agree with her comeliness. Thirdly because, when the brain is hot and dry, the optical spirit is transmitted to the eye in fewer, subtler, and stronger rays, even as such complexions are said by physicians to need less and subtler and nobler food. But (according to those same writers on medicine) the smallness of spirit or nutriment, as to matter, causeth blackness of eye; and that same smallness and subtlety of matter begetteth the nobler and stronger operation. Wherefore our Lady's eyes were black, but all the clearer and nobler of vision, even as we believe Christ also to have had such eyes. Thus, then, have we proved our Lady's colour.

The rest must be abridged. Her beauty of limb and feature has already been proved by reason; we may prove it by two other processes, "from historical description, and from her miracles." For "historical description" we are mainly dependent upon

Epiphanius, who writeth of her beauty, that she had a body adorned with all possible comeliness. She was (saith he) fair of face and noble of form, of lofty stature; her flesh was milk-white and red; she was desirable of aspect. Her head was somewhat oblong: her brow not broad but smooth; square, of moderate size, decent, humble and lowly. Her eyes were fair and clear-shining, delightful to behold; her mien was mild and benignant, humble and gentle; the pupils of her eyes were black and full of light; her eyebrows black, not too thick, but proper. Her nose was straight and of moderate size, descending in an equal line. Her sacred cheeks were

<sup>1</sup> The holy Vernicle, now at St Peter's and formerly at the Church of Sta Maria Maggiore; see Dante, *Parad.* xxxi. 104, and Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary*, p. 553. Veronica is said to have wiped Christ's face in compassion; her kerchief was found impressed with the lineaments of the suffering Saviour.

neither too full nor too meagre, but of excellent beauty, white as milk and red as the rose. Her most holy mouth was pleasant and delectable, full of all sweetness. Her lips were red but not very full; the lower was a little fuller and more swelling than the upper, in most proper proportion; for the physiognomists say that this is a sign of magnanimity and fortitude. Her teeth were white and straight, regular and excellently clean. She had a proper chin, commensurate with the rest and tending somewhat to squareness, with a dimple (saith Epiphanius) in the midst. Her neck was white, neither too fleshy nor lean, but of proper shape. Her hands were proper and clean; her fingers as though turned on a lathe, long, straight and slender. Her whole bodily shape was wondrously formed by God's wisdom. Her robe was of purple, with a sky-blue mantle.

For the third line of proof, Pelbart appeals to the Mary-miracles, and especially to one which he takes from Herolt (*Ex.* 79), though it was a good deal older. Of this, fortunately, we have an old English version; one of the few vernacular Mary-legends which our Reformation spared<sup>1</sup>. A clerk of Paris had heard so much of Mary's loveliness that he prayed to see her, even at the cost of his life or his eyesight. The vision was vouchsafed; he closed one eye and peeped only with the other; but that sight so haunted him that he prayed to see her again at the cost of the little eyesight that remained. This time she not only came again, but restored him to complete sight. To another young man, Mary showed herself in a similar vision; his heart burst for joy,

and the angels, loosing his soul from the body, bore it away in glory to see the blessed Virgin in heaven. From which things do thou take note, O devout soul [that readest this book], how much more comely and sweet than all words is Mary the Mother of the Lord Jesus. O, how happy are they who see her face to face! O, how wretched are they who lose that sight through sin!

We have here the meeting of two currents in Mary-worship—the academic and the popular. First, we have seen the good friar exhausting himself in dialectical proofs from Albertus Magnus and dan Constantine; then he clinches his argument with examples from legend. Throughout the first part, we are painfully conscious of the author's struggle to express himself with all the exactitude of theological science, yet upon a basis

<sup>1</sup> I give it fully in appendix 19, with only the spelling and a few words modernized.

of assumptions unusually precarious, even for medieval theology. What he tries thus to hammer in by force of argument, the legends express far more vividly in a hundred artless touches—the complete womanliness of Mary. Her favours were maternal; witness the almost menial services performed in mending St Thomas Becket's hair-breeches, and the electuaries brought to sick folk who found no profit in earthly medicines, and her fan with which she cooled the Cistercians reaping under an August sun, and the milk lavished upon so many Cistercians or Dominicans, and her even tenderer cares for others<sup>1</sup>. When she outmanoeuvred Christ's imperial decrees, it was with all the womanly charm and dignity that the French Queens, Elizabeth and Blanche, showed in the face of similar difficulties<sup>2</sup>. Men felt her to be as intensely human as she was supremely royal: when the lay-brother cannot obtain his petition from Christ, "I will complain of Thee unto Thy Mother"; when the mother cannot free her son from prison or her little girl from the wolf's jaws, she takes the child from Mary's lap as a hostage. The Virgin holds the Christ-child so humanly in her arms that other children, coming with their mothers into the church, offer to this playmate the cake which they themselves are eating<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mussafia, I, 979 (thirteenth century). Abbot Baldwin, as a young monk, had many trials and temptations; a voice from heaven told him to have recourse to Mary: "A few years later, he saw one night a blaze of fire which came from the church and lit up the dormitory; in the midst of the fire rode Mary. The flames surrounded his bedstead without burning it; Mary bared her breast and his breast, and healing oil seemed to distil into the sufferer—*et visum est mihi in pectus meum ex papillis ejus oleum eliquari.*"

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Herolt, *Promptuarium*, c. 14, 15, 17; this is one of the earliest of the Mary-tales.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth of Hainault, childless, was threatened in 1184 with divorce by Philippe-Auguste. She went out one morning from the royal palace of Senlis, barefooted and with a taper in her hand as a penitent, giving alms to all the poor she met, and praying from church to church that God would soften the king's heart. The poor first, and then the whole people of Senlis, besieged the royal palace, demanding the queen's pardon and the disgrace of her enemies: Philip, on the advice of his counsellors, gave way. Again, in 1216-7, Philip's eldest son Louis was attempting to conquer England, hard-pressed for men and money. The old king refused farther support; and Blanche brought her children into the royal presence: "Will you let your son die thus in a strange land? Here are my children by him, his heirs who will be your heir when you die. I will take them round Paris and pawn these your grandsons to the rich merchants, if there be no other way of raising money for my husband." Here, again, the old king was shamed into compliance.

Moreover, Mary had her feminine fastidiousness and even her coquetry, of a royal kind. When the monk's breath is vinolent in choir, she turns her face away: "the prayer that reeks of strong wine cannot smell sweet to such as she is"<sup>1</sup>. Inspecting a Cistercian dormitory (or, in another version, a Dominican), she was greatly shocked to see one monk who, in the extreme heat, had loosened only slightly the heavy frock in which brethren were bound to live both by day and by night<sup>2</sup>. Still more significant is that whole class of tales which puts her into competition with earthly lovers or brides. The Church had formally decreed marriage as a sacrament, and the marriage bond as indissoluble; but Mary was above Canon Law. A boy went aside from tennis to put his ring in safety, and slipped it upon Mary's finger in the church hard by; she clasped her finger upon it, and bystanders held this to be a true espousal. The boy, grown to man's estate, took a wife; but, on that very night, "Mary appeared to him in a vision, as placing herself between him and his bride; showed the ring, and rebuked him for his breach of faith"; the bridegroom fled forthwith and became a monk<sup>3</sup>. Another story of the kind is quoted by Mussafia from a thirteenth century collection (I, 984):

A knight was in love with a lady: an Abbot advised him to say 150 *Aves* daily for a year; then he would be able to compass his ends. At the end of the year he was out hunting, and lost his companions; in the forest he found a chapel with a statue of the Virgin before which he said his prayer. Then Mary appeared to him; he declared her to be fairer than his own lady-love, and promised to serve her from henceforth. She demanded that he should say his *Aves* for another year, and then he should come to bliss. He told the whole story to the Abbot, took the cowl, and died at the year's end.

Caesarius gives a slightly different version: a knight was dying for love of his lord's wife, who was too chaste to listen to him; here it was a hermit, and not an abbot, who counselled him

<sup>1</sup> Lommatzsch, pp. 41-2, from Gautier de Coincy. He quotes in his footnote from a sermon of Helinand, who found this fault in some of his fellow-Cistercians even of the twelfth century. "The monks cannot sing their psalms, nor the lay brethren work, but when they have full fed and drunken—*nisi pleni et ructuantes*." Cf. Chaucer, *C. T. D.* 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Razzi, p. 167 and *passim* in Cistercian-Dominican collections.

<sup>3</sup> Mussafia, I, 962; cf. 956; *Golden Legend*, II, 128. Razzi has typical specimens of these Mary-bridegrooms; see pp. 6, 12, 46, 150.



to say his daily hundred *Aves* for a year. Mary then appeared to him in her royal beauty: he found her holding his horse as he came out of church: "Am I fair in thine eyes? Come then unto me, and I will be thy spouse." She sealed the espousal with a kiss; the knight had no need to take the cowl; "from that hour he was so fully freed from the temptation of his lord's wife's love that even the lady herself wondered at it." At the end of the year, he passed away after a few hours' illness, "and entered into the bride-chamber of heaven to celebrate the promised nuptials"<sup>1</sup>.

Nor does Mary concern herself more with the forms of civil justice than with those of Canon Law. A striking story, which was not the least popular among Mary-legends, may be given in Mussafia's summary (I, 984):

An honourable lady frequented a certain church. A monk, guardian and treasurer of the monastery<sup>2</sup>, first conversed with her on religious things; then came temptation and sin; they resolved to elope together, he with the treasure of the monastery and she with a great sum stolen from her husband. Chase was given; they were overtaken and cast into prison. Filled with remorse, they prayed to Mary. At her bidding, the devils brought all back to their proper places—prisoners and stolen treasures. When the monks found the monk at his prayers, and when the husband found his wife at home, then they hastened to the dungeon, and, to their great astonishment, found them both chained there. But these were two devils, who forthwith disappeared.

All these stories aimed at the humanizing of a creed which,

<sup>1</sup> Caes. Heist. II, 40; Herolt, c. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Custos et thesaurarius*; another version calls him sacristan, which amounts to the same thing. This is in Méon and Barbazon, IV (1808), 119, Vitry, p. 117, and Rutebeuf, ed. A. Jubinal, I, 303; compare p. 329, note. In Rutebeuf's version (p. 315) the Virgin withholds the fugitives from actual carnal sin before their capture, but this is neither stated nor implied in the other versions. Vitry, the earliest of authorities, gives the story as told him by "a certain most religious man"; and his version of the Virgin's speech to the sinners is most instructive. "I can procure remission of your sins from my Son, but what can I do with such a scandal [as your flight has caused]?" The demons are more resourceful than the Saint; "unable to resist her commands," they excogitate the fraud described in my text, and finally vanish into air with an advertisement to the public: "Let us depart, for we have deluded enough, and made men think evil enough of Religious persons." Their success was complete: "All fell at the feet of the monk and the lady and besought their pardon. Lo! what infamy and scandal and inestimable harm the devil would have procured against the Religious, unless the Blessed Virgin had come to their help!"

in the hands of formal theologians and dialecticians, had grown too inhuman. How could the ordinary man—nay, even the ordinary monk—face the awful implications of orthodox logic? To God's justice, humanity is a mass of perdition; who then shall save us from the body of this death? As one medieval writer puts it, even though there were but one man in the whole world doomed to hell, how must each one of us tremble to think that he might be just that one! To leave the world for the cloister is much; daily penance and mortification are much; but the man who takes these sacrifices most seriously is he who is least likely to feel that he has thus redeemed himself wholly from original sin. "Did not Paul of Tarsus, whom admiring men have since named Saint, feel that *he* was 'the chief of sinners'; and Nero of Rome, jocund in spirit (*wohlgemuth*), spend much of his time in fiddling?"<sup>1</sup> Thus, while it was steadily preached that God is of infinite justice, yet sermon and legend frequently reminded the worshipper that "My thoughts are not as your thoughts"; and divine justice was often practically indistinguishable from human caprice<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, it may be said to have left an open field to human caprice; if a man sent his wife to the devil, or the mother her child, to the devil they duly went<sup>3</sup>. And why should not God, if it so pleased Him, damn some thousands of His struggling adorers, and exalt some careless sinner from the dust? The most meticulously careful of God's servants must always bear in mind the converse contingency of the penitent thief: "a man is damned who lived all his life in sanctity, because he sinned at the last"<sup>4</sup>.

But why take account of this terrible contingency? Why indeed, except that in every company we find one man who sees black butterflies where another sees white? The medieval melancholiac tortured himself with as exquisite torments as

<sup>1</sup> *Sartor Resartus*, ch. vii, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 22 A.

<sup>3</sup> Giraldus, *Gem. Eccl.* (R.S. II, 56). A man in Italy, *nostris diebus*, was vexed by a jealous wife, and sent her to the devil, who immediately took possession. "But, since the woman was of noble rank and birth, her friends asked the devil whether he claimed any share in her soul, and he answered: 'None.' When therefore they asked wherefore he vexed her, he replied: 'Because her lord and husband, who hath power over her body, gave her body to me.'" The mother who sent her yet unborn son to the devil is one of the most frequent of Mary-legends.

<sup>4</sup> *Alphabet of Tales*, p. 163; cf. Ezekiel xviii, 24.

Cowper or Bunyan; refer to any collection of preachers' materials under *accidia*, *desperatio*; again note how the instances of *accidia* there quoted are, in overwhelming proportion, drawn from monastic life.

"I will tell you a story," writes Caesarius of Heisterbach, "which I have heard from the mouth of a certain abbot who knew the man and was his familiar friend; nay, I also knew him. His name was Henry, a lay-brother of Villers, and son to dom Christian, monk of Hemmenrode, of whom I shall relate marvels in the 16th chapter of my 7th book<sup>1</sup>. This Henry tended the poor in our hospital, a man of much humility, patience and compassion; and the more he feared God the more he dreaded to be cast off from Him. For the devil had sent a certain despair into his heart, saying: 'For that thou art an illegitimate child, thou shalt not inherit the kingdom of heaven.' This thought had so grown in his heart that he could get no consolation whatsoever from his confessors, whether they alleged Holy Scripture or examples of other men. But the Lord had mercy upon him. One night, when his temptation was sorest, He brought him into a long and spacious building, all in dream, wherein he saw a great multitude both of men and of women; and a voice came unto him, saying: 'Henry, seest thou this multitude? All are born in lawful wedlock, yet all but thou are doomed to damnation.' Then he awoke in great joy; for he knew that the vision was vouchsafed for his sake. From that hour forth the temptation ceased; and Henry, so long as he lived, gave thanks unto God who deserteth not them that trust in Him"<sup>2</sup>.

A host of similar instances might be quoted; the story typifies a whole side of cloister life; and, indeed, of medieval life in general. We must not be misled by the noisy merriment which often echoes down to us from those times; that glare of sunlight cast shadows of proportionate gloom. Medieval society differed from ours in its greater contrasts; to these men, far more even than to the seventeenth century or to our own, we may apply Quarles's antithetical description:

One frisks and sings and cries: "A flagon more  
To drench dry cares, and make the welkin roar!"  
Another droops: the sunshine makes him sad<sup>3</sup>.

Then, even more than now, the same creed which drove one

<sup>1</sup> Christian was a miracle-worker and visionary; I hope to print his story in my volume of documents.

<sup>2</sup> 1, 202.

<sup>3</sup> *Emblems*, 1, 8.

man to despair might encourage his fellow in frivolity. Against the saintly Brother Giles or Brother Leo, brooding over their possible damnation, we may put the fabliau of the Serf who fought his way into Paradise, or Dunbar's satire of Kynd Kittok<sup>1</sup>. To hope, or not to hope, depends even more upon temperament or will than upon the peculiar tenets of any religious sect. The noble side of the medieval sinner's hope appears in many places, and nowhere more beautifully than in Guinevere's parting words to her lover:

Therefore, Sir Lancelot, wit thou well that I am set in such a plight to get my soul-heal; and yet I trust, through God's grace, after my death to have a sight of the blessed face of Christ, and at domesday to sit on His right side; for as sinful as ever I was are saints in heaven.

The baser side comes out in many records which are deservedly less familiar, yet which must receive due attention from all who would know how our forefathers lived and thought. For one real hero of romance (as St Francis reminded his followers) there were many mere camp-followers who only chanted his deeds; for the splendid courage of one true convert to the cloister there were multitudes who talked distantly of later conversion. Bromyard is especially illuminating here; his long experience as mission-preacher and confessor gives him a great width of diagnosis and a ready command of remedies. Men who think God has two mercies, one which we can daily neglect and another upon which we can count at the last, are like the drunkard who saw two candles and, having blown one flame out as superfluous, was astonished to find its fellow disappear. When, at their last gasp, they fall back upon "Mary, pray for me, Peter pray for me!" they may find themselves disappointed. The gates of hell are always hospitably open; the gatekeepers are always courteous and willing: but heaven is a castle whose drawbridge is raised inexorably at nightfall—that is, at the moment of bodily death. Presumptuous sinners are like those unclerical clerics who spend their lives in crime, counting upon their neck-verse at the gallows-foot; or, again, they resemble those thieves and murderers who flatter themselves that they will always find a church at hand for sanctuary, whereas "we

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 22 B and C.

see that many robbers are deceived in this hope," and are caught before they can reach the church door. Again,

even as the physician saith, "Thy sickness is not so sore; thou shalt escape, be of good courage," so doth the devil comfort almost all men, saying, "Ecclesiastics and clerics, and men of high estate live unchastely, and do these other things, usury and injustice and so forth; wherefore then shouldst thou not do the same? fear not, for such things are of small account in thy case, and in comparison of these men's sins."... Then again he saith, "Thou art young: thou hast seen many who, having sinned in youth, live well in their old age."... And thirdly, "Sin boldly; for, however great thy sins may be, God's mercy is greater." In this third fashion he deceiveth more folk—nay, almost the whole world; wherefore the preacher should say more against that devilish deceit, and little or nothing concerning God's mercy; since, among his hearers at the sermon, for an hundred who sin exceedingly in presumption of mercy there is not one who sinneth from desperation<sup>1</sup>.

We find here the process which we have already noted in dealing with hell, and which has to be taken account of in all religious history. In every age, over-emphasis brings final indifference. In the *Concordia Regularis*, ascribed to Dunstan, it is explained that elaborate dramatic church services like the Easter *Quem Quaeritis* are introduced "to fortify the unlearned people in their faith." Robert of Brunne, about 1300, gives the same reason for the miracle-plays into which these services developed:

To make men be in belief of God,  
That He rose with flesh and blood...  
To make men to believe steadfastly  
That God was born of Virgin Marie.

Yet the preacher who, about 1370, complained of the final development of these performances, gave it as one of his reasons for his disapproval that

miracle-playing... may not give occasion of turning men to the belief, but of perverting; and therefore many men ween that there is no Hell of everlasting pains, but that God doth but threaten us and not do it indeed, as be playing of miracles in sign and not in deed<sup>2</sup>.

In all ages, the herd-instinct has spoken more strongly to the

<sup>1</sup> *Sum. Praed.* M. ix, 39-50.

<sup>2</sup> Creizenach in C.H.E.L. v, 37; *Handlyng Synne*, l. 4643; *Reliq. Antiq.* II, 45; *Medieval Garner*, pp. 570 ff.

multitude than the words of the most impressive preacher; millions would have echoed the unrepentant conclusion:

—this I know,  
I should live the same life over, if I had to live again,  
And the chances are, I go where most men go<sup>1</sup>.

So it was in the Middle Ages. Others show no great sense of an immediate call: wherefore should I? So long as a man can go into eternity with the passport of confession and absolution, he is safe enough. Therefore, as Bromyard complains again, "men say: 'So long as our tongue can say three words before our death, we shall escape all these perils and snares of the devil.'" The preacher has, of course, admirably logical answers to this fallacy.

A certain man, who was wont to speak thus, plunged on horseback, hot from hunting, into a stream beyond his depth; he fell forthwith into the water, and the three last words that he spake were, "Devil take me!" Another was wont to make the same boast; that, so long as he might speak with a priest before his death, he would escape all the perils aforesaid. Yet, when this man lay on his deathbed, and the priest spake unto him of confession, he answered only, "Bravely run, my black hound! O, excellent red hound, thou hast never failed of thy quarry!" and thus, naming one dog after another, he went to hell with the confession of a dog; for he could not speak but of those things which he had loved all his life. . . . Let every man think in his heart, how he will do when he is set in the midst of his enemies; when he shall see the demons with their hellish claws in readiness to seize upon his soul, and, on the other hand, his friends and executors, with their bird-lime fingers, preparing to open his chest and his purse and make a prey of his worldly goods.

Etienne de Bourbon tells us of an old woman who, hearing the cuckoo cry five times on May-day, followed the current superstition that this promised her at least five more years to live. On her deathbed

when her daughter warned her to repent and confess, she replied, "There is no need, for I have yet five years to live"; and, when she was again warned, having partly lost her speech, she murmured five times *cuckoo*! then, having wholly lost speech, she raised her five fingers, and with that gesture she gave up the ghost<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Adam Lindsay Gordon, *The Sick Stockrider*.

<sup>2</sup> Bromyard, D. II, 8-10; Bourbon, pp. 60, 315.

But how could these false presumptions be driven out of the popular mind, so long as preachers of the highest repute extolled the sinner's chances even to the very last moment, if only Mary's interest could be enlisted? A hardened offender, unable to find a priest before his enemies wreak their vengeance upon him, cries with his latest breath: "I commend my soul to the Virgin's Son!" Then the disappointed devils slink off, with one more grudge against the Virgin: "The fellow hath been saved for one word that he spake at his very death!" and the good cloisterers Herolt and Razzi, with their fellows, publish the story abroad among the glories of Mary<sup>1</sup>.

Mary, then, perhaps more than all the other saints put together, brought relief from that intolerable logic of the law in matters of salvation or damnation: "Let us go secretly to the Queen and promise a present!" Women felt this even more than men; women had most reason to rebel against that priestly rigorism which condemned the dance, and all elaboration of dress, and light unstudied speech; and which, even in natural beauty itself, often saw one of Satan's deadliest snares<sup>2</sup>. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, it may almost be said that no man could really possess nature with a good conscience, until the battle had been fought out between Renaissance libertinism and that rigour of medieval theology, transplanted from the Roman into the anti-Roman church and exaggerated in the transplanting, which has earned the special name of Puritanism<sup>3</sup>. With the gradual decision of that struggle—so far as it ever will be decided—has come a modern balance, in reasonable minds, resembling the balance of antiquity; and it is far easier now than in the Middle Ages to understand that Pauline text: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." It would be impossible, I think, among the Franciscans themselves, to find any real parallel to that divine freedom of mind which we see in the seventeenth century

<sup>1</sup> Herolt, *Promptuarium*, ex. 43; Razzi, p. 101; Bromyard, M. ix, 39.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 23, "Medieval Puritanism."

<sup>3</sup> I am not here forgetting the earliest Franciscan movement. In some ways it was all that has been claimed for it—an almost unique combination of joy in life with joy in God—yet we must not forget how even St Francis confessed that asceticism had made him "sin grievously against Brother Body"; and, even at the best of times, the whole world of women's converse was almost closed to the really earnest Franciscan.

Anglican priest Traherne, penetrated through and through with the essential purity of childhood and of visible nature, and the eternal goodness of God<sup>1</sup>.

Certainly Adam in Paradise had not more sweet and curious apprehensions of the world, than I when I was a child... All Time was Eternity, and a perpetual Sabbath. Is it not strange, that an infant should be heir of the whole World, and see those mysteries which the books of the learned never unfold? The corn was orient and immortal wheat, which never should be reaped, nor was ever sown. I thought it had stood from everlasting to everlasting. The dust and stones of the street were as precious as gold: the gates were at first the end of the world. The green trees when I saw them first through one of the gates transported and ravished me, their sweetness and unusual beauty made my heart to leap, and almost mad with ecstasy, they were such strange and wonderful things. The Men! O what venerable and reverend creatures did the aged seem! Immortal Cherubims! And young men glittering and sparkling Angels, and maids strange seraphic pieces of life and beauty! Boys and girls tumbling in the street, and playing, were moving jewels. I knew not that they were born or should die; but all things abided eternally as they were in their proper places. Eternity was manifest in the Light of the Day, and something infinite behind everything appeared: which talked with my expectation and moved my desire. The city seemed to stand in Eden, or to be built in Heaven. The streets were mine, the temple was mine, the people were mine, their clothes and gold and silver were mine, as much as their sparkling eyes, fair skins and ruddy faces. The skies were mine, and so were the sun and moon and stars, and all the World was mine; and I the only spectator and enjoyer of it.

We must not blame the thirteenth century for failing thus to blend the serenity of the ancients with Christian belief in God's omnipotence and greatness. The age had its own struggles, contending manfully against barbarous forces; in so far as we ourselves are no longer thus troubled, it is to these past champions that we owe a great measure of our freedom. But let us not pretend that, in their manful fight, they attained to a peace which all their own records contradict. Berthold of Regensburg is the greatest of all Franciscan mission-preachers; he had not only the ear of the multitude, but commanded Roger Bacon's admiration also. Next to Berthold, perhaps, comes St Bernardino of Siena, whose sermons have come down

<sup>1</sup> *Centuries of Meditations*, 1908, pp. 155-8.



to us even more fully. It would be impossible, among the hundreds of sermons which have survived from those great friars, to find even a remote parallel to Traherne's trust in human nature or in the visible nature of earth and cloud and sunlight. The most that I have ever found in medieval theologians—apart from the *Fioretti* and a few of the simplest Franciscan records—amounts to a brief and perfunctory admission that it is possible to study God in nature, and an insistence on that fact that such a study will convince us of His greatness and goodness. St Bernard himself, when he spoke of the trees as his teachers, intended only the freedom for study and meditation which he had found in the solitude of the forest. When abbé Blampignon tries to convince us that the Saint was a great student and lover of nature, he has scarcely one really relevant quotation to offer; the four pages which he devotes to this subject are drawn mainly from his own imagination<sup>1</sup>. With Berthold and Bernardino, we have to some extent the evidence of their hearers; for the scribe has sometimes noted interjections from the audience and rejoinders from the pulpit. These show us plainly how hard the average man found it to accept the particular scheme of salvation thus offered to him; and, even more, the average woman. The preacher was among the most sympathetic of his class; but on many points he showed a very masculine lack of sympathy; and the canonist John of Ayton has caught that murmur of discontent, when he writes: "The nuns answer briefly to these statutes, and to others made against their wantonness, 'These men sat well at their ease when they decreed these things against us with these intolerably hard restrictions of theirs'"<sup>2</sup>. Above all, women must have revolted against the doctrine of infant perdition<sup>3</sup>. Very few can have accepted this in their heart of hearts, not merely in passive acquiescence, but reflectively and actively. This must have been one of the many cases in which people let their priests talk, but quietly went their own way. No mother's heart could really have followed those refinements of logic by which Aquinas tries to temper that sentence ascribed to Augustine: "Keep

<sup>1</sup> *De l'Esprit des sermons de St-B.* (1858), pp. 81-5.

<sup>2</sup> In Lyndwood's *Provinciale*, 1679, app. p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2 B.

thou most firmly, and never doubt, but that the infants who have left this world without the sacrament of baptism must be punished with eternal punishment"<sup>1</sup> (*aeterno supplicio puniendos*) and the word *supplicium* nearly always connotes torment. Such *pain*, argues Aquinas, is not bodily suffering, but only the penalty of loss, to wit, their separation from the sight of God; and he concludes, after much refinement of logic, that the child will be somehow happy. But what could the mother make of this, when she heard other preachers specify this very loss of God's sight as the worst of all infernal pains? What was she to make of the child's eternal separation even from herself, quite apart from its separation from God, which, in proportion to the warmth of her religious feeling, she was bound to put immeasurably higher in the scale of loss? Would she not have given her life-blood to spare the child, for a single year, this abandonment which even the most merciful churchman proclaimed as eternal and irrevocable? Was she reconciled to that which Aquinas himself could not attempt to explain away, that it is not her duty even to pray God's mercy for this God-forsaken flesh of her own flesh?<sup>2</sup> In so far as such things were realized at all, there was a good deal of active or passive revolt against them—a revolt by the final success of which, in our own days, those men have often profited most who still most ignorantly seek to glorify the past.

<sup>1</sup> *Sum. Theol.* Suppl. quaest. lxix; cf. *De Malo*. quaest. v, art. 2, and *In Sent.* dist. xxxi, q. 2. This last passage is printed in some editions of the *Sum. Theol.* as quaest. lxxi (or lxxiii), 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Sum. Theol.* Suppl. q. lxxi, art. 7: "the prayers of the living cannot help children in the limbo." According to the *Summa Angelica* (*Missa*, § 50) Aquinas explains elsewhere that Masses said for infants cannot affect their state for good or for evil, but such Masses may be celebrated "to recommend the mystery of redemption!" It had taken long, however, for this to become definitely understood in the Catholic Church. Mabillon gives a good many early instances of prayers or Masses for the damned, to gain them salvation or to relieve their torments; and he points out how even the learned and usually trustworthy Bollandist scholar, Papebroch, in one of the Lives he printed in his *Acta Sanctorum*, "has expunged these last words (even though they are in the Greek also) lest they should offend some [modern orthodox reader]." (AA.SS.O.S.B. VII, 147-8, A.D. 942, § 50.) The variations of orthodox opinion on this subject are very well and fully recounted by H. C. Lea, *Auricular Confession*, III, 329 ff.

## CHAPTER XI

### WOMEN AND THE FAITH

THE cult of the Virgin probably did a little indirectly to raise the status of women; but the claims usually made in this direction are not, so far as I know, borne out by any documentary evidence; and, on their very face, they are grossly exaggerated<sup>1</sup>. Tacitus found a respect for women among the barbarous Germans which contrasted with their status in Roman society; but those Germans, as yet, knew nothing of the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, after many centuries of Mary-worship, the status of the medieval woman is far lower than we are entitled to expect. Sir Thomas More's was an essentially chivalrous nature; but few women who read his English works carefully would wish themselves back in his day. The Knight of La Tour-Landry wrote in the hey-day of Mary-worship; and, to him, wife-beating was a matter of course even in good society. The woman-worship of the troubadours is admittedly leavened with pitiful unrealities; and, such as it is, it probably owes at least as much to imitation of the politer Arabs of Spain as to the cult of the Virgin<sup>2</sup>. To chastise one's wife was not only customary,

<sup>1</sup> "La femme était bien peu gardée. Sa place n'était guère haute. Si la vierge, la femme idéale, s'élevait de siècle en siècle, la femme réelle comptait bien peu dans ces masses rustiques, ce mélange d'hommes et de troupeaux." J. Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 1862, p. 28. Cf. Remy de Gourmont, *Le Latin Mystique*, 1892, pp. 17 ff.

<sup>2</sup> This complicated subject needs fuller treatment than it has yet received. The conventional crude contrast between Christian and non-Christian treatment of women in the Middle Ages needs modification in the light of R. A. Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, 1907, pp. 87-92. A recent book, though seemingly much exaggerated, pleads very strongly against the conventional view: Wacyf Boutros Ghali, *La Tradition Chevaleresque des Arabes* (Paris, Plon, 1919). Compare Gustave le Bon, *La civilisation des Arabes*, p. 286: "Les chroniques arabes d'Espagne sont remplies de récits qui prouvent combien de telles qualités [*i.e.* of chivalry] étaient répandues. Le Wali de Cordoue ayant, en 1139, assiégé Tolède, appartenant alors aux chrétiens, la reine Bérengère, qui y était enfermée, lui envoya un héraut pour lui représenter qu'il n'était pas digne d'un chevalier brave, galant et généreux d'attaquer une femme. Le général arabe se retira aussitôt, demandant pour toute faveur l'honneur de saluer la reine. Ces mœurs chevaleresques finirent par se répandre chez les chrétiens; mais ce fut assez lentement." Le Bon goes on to draw an unfavourable comparison, in this matter of chivalry,

not only expressly permitted by the statutes of some towns, but even formally granted to the husband by Canon Law<sup>1</sup>. Those theologians who extol Mary's victory over Satan sometimes add the counterbalancing reflection that the frailty of the sex in general adds additional lustre to this particular miracle. A great modern panegyrist of medieval Catholicism, Remy de Gourmont, frankly admits this tendency in the literature with which he is dealing, and appears to approve it, at least for that time and place, citing freely from the impassioned rhetoric of St Odo of Cluny<sup>2</sup>. St Odo, who died in 942, was the greatest monastic figure of his time—perhaps the most impressive figure in the whole Church, not excepting the Pope. In his *Collationes*, addressed to the bishop of Limoges and dealing with the manners of the clergy, both secular and regular, he speaks bitterly of their attraction towards women's society, and especially that of nuns<sup>3</sup>. He quotes St Germanus, St Martin, and St Cyprian on the uselessness or wickedness of female adornments: "the highest virtue in a woman is not to wish to be seen." He cites Jerome's bitter satire upon the coquetties of devout women in his own day:

They are clad in comely array, forgetting that Christ is spoken of by Zechariah as clad in filthy garments<sup>4</sup>. . . Their black and shining shoes, by their very creaking, excite wanton eyes to fierce desire. Their hair falls down for a little, and is gathered up again. Neck and throat are casually bared by the falling-away of their cloak, and are hastily covered again as though they would not be seen.

between the Cid and his Arab adversaries. See also Dozy, II, 203; the Cid deliberately burned one of his bravest adversaries at the stake, and would have burned the whole household, including his wife and daughters, but for the outcry of the population of Valencia and the protests even of his own soldiers.

<sup>1</sup> See glosses to Gratian, *Decretum*, pars I, dist. xxv, c. 3; pars II, causa vii, q. 1, c. 29; causa xxxiii, q. 2, c. 10; cf. *ibid.* q. 5, cc. 15-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Latin Mystique*, 1892, p. 18. De Gourmont, like Huysmans, seems to hold something like the Manichaean theory of *credentes* and *perfecti*—that it is the function of a few men to save themselves and the world by extremes of ascetic enthusiasm, and of the rest to attach themselves to this saving work by belief, living meanwhile pretty much as they choose.

<sup>3</sup> Lib. II, c. viii-ix; P.L. vol. 133, col. 555.

<sup>4</sup> Zech. iii, 3, 4, Vulg. A comparison of the Authorized and Douay versions here will illustrate the slavery to the letter of the Bible into which medieval expository traditions frequently betrayed theologians: a slavery which became still more harmful when the Vulgate version had grown to be itself regarded as an inspired text.

"I am ashamed," writes the saintly Odo, "to report Jerome's following words," yet in his own immediate argument he goes on to satirize womanly beauty with a crudity of language which Jerome never reaches, or certainly never exceeds<sup>1</sup>. For this point of view was with him, as with Jerome, a matter almost of professional necessity. St Hugh of Lincoln, an extraordinarily human man in other ways, was wont to hold up two other saintly churchmen of his time to the admiration of his younger hearers. St Hugh of Grenoble "being a man of wondrous modesty and chastity," knew only one woman by sight; whereas Ancelin, bishop of Belley, met them not with fear but with bold unconcern:

he was wont to say: "I for my part can look indifferently upon any women whatsoever; but I forthwith flay them all." Whereby he meant that...he mentally withdrew their skin, and contemplated the foul corruption that lurked within<sup>2</sup>.

If self-defence dictated this attitude towards woman, so did orthodoxy make it almost impossible to render justice to the married state. The doctrine of original sin involved, quite naturally, a one-sided view of wedlock and procreation; a view which was irrevocably fixed in Canon Law, and which thus became one of the main obstacles to the growth of the belief in the Immaculate Conception<sup>3</sup>. "Hold most firmly" (so runs a sentence of Gratian's *Decretum*), "and do not doubt on any account, that every human being who is conceived by the coition of a man with a woman is born with original sin, subject to impiety and death, and therefore a child of wrath"<sup>4</sup>. The pious Meffret, about 1450, quotes this text in support of his statement that "almost the whole host of holy Doctors assert her to have been conceived, like the rest of mankind, in original sin"; it is wrong, therefore, "to fabricate [the contrary] in honour of the Virgin, who, being so full of truth, hath no need

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 23, "Medieval Puritanism."

<sup>2</sup> *Magna Vita S. Hugonis*, R.S. p. 203; cf. Meffret, *De Temp.* p. 28. Ancelin was probably inspired by Boethius, *De Consol.* lib. III, prosa 8: "Would not the body even of Alcibiades, so fair to behold outwardly, appear more foul if, with Lynceus' eyes, we could see into his entrails?" a sentiment which Boethius has taken from Aristophanes. The Middle Ages, knowing nothing of Alcibiades, took him for a woman of supreme beauty; hence Villon's line "Archipiada ne Thaïs," in his *Ballade des Dames du Temps jadis*.

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 1 B.

<sup>4</sup> Pars III, dist. iv, c. 3.

of our lies," since it is a far greater miracle that God should have made so precious a vessel "even out of vile clay" than if He had made one of equal price from pure gold<sup>1</sup>. From this it follows logically, as other medieval theologians maintain, that the Virgin's exaltation is only magnified by emphasizing the lowliness of the stock from which she sprang: God's work in a frail woman was greater than it could have been in the nobler sex. And indeed the artificial apotheosis of the Virgin, her legendary and sometimes unnatural perfections, her consecration as the superhuman patroness of an angelic life, vowed to sexlessness, often shut off the rest of her sex from rational respect. The Wife of Bath said no more than the literal truth when she complained that no cleric could be found to speak well of women. Volumes, literally, could be filled with their anti-feminist tirades<sup>2</sup>. Cistercian, Dominican and Franciscan, those great rivals for Mary's favours, vie with each other in misogyny. To follow the subject *femina*, *mulier*, through the indices to Pelbart, Herolt or Bonaventura is to realize the Wife of Bath's moderation. It would be impossible, I believe, to find in pagan Latin literature any parallel to those pages of abuse, sentence piled upon sentence, which are frequent in monastic writers. Aristophanes, Juvenal, Martial are ungallant enough, but which of them ventures on that damnable iteration of dispraise which we find concentrated in the distich quoted by Cardinal Hugues de St Cher in his great Bible commentary?

Femina corpus opes animam vim lumina vocem  
Polluit adnihilat necat eripit orbat acerbat<sup>3</sup>.

Gautier de Coincy, the great Mary-poet, is no better here than the rest of them; for he too was a Religious. Once, it is true, he does launch out into warm praise of good women; nay, in a single concluding sentence, he even lauds the sex in general; but, as Lommatzsch reminds us, he has here to think of his three noble patronesses, the countesses of Soissons and Blois and the abbess of Fontevrault. Far more fully, in other places,

<sup>1</sup> Meffret, *Fest.* p. 30 (serm. 2). Meffret pursues the same subject in sermon 3, quoting from Gregory the Great: "omnes in peccatis nati sumus, et ex carnis delectatione concepti culpam originale contraximus."

<sup>2</sup> I have given some in *From St Francis to Dante*, chapter viii *ad fin.*

<sup>3</sup> III, 223, i.

has he criticized the daughters of Eve<sup>1</sup>. It is not only their love of dress, and the art with which they trick themselves out in beauties which Nature never intended; but Gautier finds deeper and more ineradicable faults. He has all the monk's cynical distrust of women's virtue; he not only quotes, but defends, that appalling sentence from Ovid, that, if a woman be chaste, it is for lack of opportunity: "casta est, quam nemo rogavit"<sup>2</sup>. Nobody can trust a woman's word: "so much she doth and saith, and lieth and sweareth, that the man is besotted with her"; "full of great folly is the man who believeth a woman, be she foolish or wise." Their caprices and their love of domination are equally lamentable. All these libels from the pen of this devoted Mary-worshipper are thoroughly characteristic of his age; it would be difficult to find a single love-poet of the Middle Ages who finds as much definite good to say in favour of woman as the clerical moralists, practically without exception, find to say against her. It may be pleaded that this ungallantry had become a literary *cliché*; but that makes the evidence all the more significant. The Mary-cult was not, on the whole, among the true civilizing forces of the Middle Ages; it was rather a reversion to earlier pagan instincts which had never been entirely eradicated<sup>3</sup>.

We see this, directly we look at the contemporary and concomitant survivals. Even among those who were most anxious to bespeak the secret favour of this Queen, there were some who clung also to banished Queens of the past; Mary stood radiant on her crescent moon, but there lingered still a Twilight of the Gods. "La femme... a un secret qu'elle ne dit jamais à l'église. Elle enferme dans son cœur le souvenir, la compassion des pauvres anciens dieux, tombés à l'état d'esprits... Toute bonne

<sup>1</sup> Lommatzsch, 79-92.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 82; Ovid, *Amores*, I, viii, 43; Thomas Walleis also practically adopts this wicked sentence, XLVII, x.

<sup>3</sup> "We find that the savage, in treating woman, and those activities of hers in particular that are most closely related to her maternal function, as at once sacred and unclean—in a word, as taboo—has unconsciously provided her with a sphere of her own that is effectively hedged off from the turmoil of the life-struggle in its severest aspects... Thus, the life of the savage woman is subject to many needless restrictions; and her supposed uncleanness involves a taint of inferiority for which occasional acts of adoration afford no adequate compensation" (*Times Lit. Sup.* Dec. 1, 1921, p. 783; review of *Taboo and Genetics* by Knight, Peters and Blanchard).

chrétienne qu'elle est, elle a pour eux un coin du cœur"<sup>1</sup>. We have seen how St Gregory, in his message to St Augustine of Canterbury, had counselled that the pagan temples should not be destroyed, but sprinkled with holy water and re-dedicated; that "the sacrifices of oxen to the devils they adored" should only henceforth "be refined on, and altered to an innocent practice"<sup>2</sup>. The old idols remained under the new Christian veneer; orthodoxy itself believed in them, while it condemned them as devils; to the multitude, it did not matter much what they were called; they were realities still, as they always had been; realities that must be taken account of. What the priest cast away as unclean, the devil took for his own. The Church suspected Nature; seldom does a monastic writer describe the beauties of field or forest or water; and even then, perhaps, only to mark how short is the step from these delights to the pains of hell<sup>3</sup>. The flight of rooks which St Edmund Rich saw between Oxford and Abingdon was a flight of devils; St Dominic saw the devil in a sparrow that hindered his reading; therefore he plucked it alive; the charming nature-touches in Francis and Anselm and Hugh of Lincoln are not typical, but highly exceptional<sup>4</sup>. Nature was cursed since the Fall; the infant was "a mass of perdition"; celibacy was the holiest of human states. Marriage and family life (in spite of efforts to avoid that Manichaean conclusion), were put so definitely upon a lower plane that the devil naturally took them partly into his domain<sup>5</sup>. Human reason was suspect, except within the closest of leading-

<sup>1</sup> J. Michelet, *La Sorcière*, 1862, pp. 35-7. He adds in his note: "Rien de plus touchant que cette fidélité. Malgré la persécution, au cinquième siècle, les paysans promenaient, en pauvres petites poupées de linge ou de farine, les dieux de ces grandes religions, Jupiter, Minerve, Vénus. Diane fut indestructible jusqu'au fond de la Germanie (V. Grimm). Au huitième siècle, on promène les dieux encore. Dans certaines petites cabanes, on sacrifie, on prend les augures, etc. (*Indiculus paganiarum*, Concile de Leptines en Hainaut). Les *Capitulaires* menacent en vain de la mort. Au douzième siècle, Burchard de Worms, en rappelant les défenses, témoigne qu'elles sont inutiles. En 1389 la Sorbonne condamne encore les traces du paganisme, et, vers 1400, Gerson (*Contra Astrol.*) rappelle comme chose actuelle cette superstition obstinée." But Burchard really wrote about 1000 A.D.

<sup>2</sup> Bede, *Ecc. Hist.* bk 1, ch. 30.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. F. Pfeiffer, *Marienlegenden*, p. 114; *Exord. Mag. Cist.* dist. v, cap. 21, col. 1176. See also appendix 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Golden Legend*, vi, 234; *Lives of the Brethren*, tr. J. P. Conway, p. 290.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 2 B.



strings; experimental science was suspect; dissection was forbidden; the physician was driven into the devil's camp; "his studie was but lytel on the Bible." The solemn Pact with Satan becomes a common theme in medieval legend at the moment of the fullest development of Mary-worship; and, in the later Middle Ages, begins that desperate struggle with witchcraft which lasts far beyond the Reformation. Orthodox and heterodox magic were kindled at the same fire and fanned by the same breezes; in church, the women crowded round Mary; yet they paid homage to the older deities by their nightly fireside, or at the time-honoured sacred haunts, grove or stone or spring. Herolt, one of our great Mary-chroniclers, is eloquent on this subject. A demon, under force of conjuration, confessed that more women went to hell than men.

"How can you say that?" enquired his evoker, "seeing how many usurers and robbers there are, how many gamblers and adulterers, drunkards and blasphemers?" The demon, under farther compulsion, replied: "It is for their witchcrafts and divinations; seeing that most women belie their catholic faith with charms and spells, after the fashion of Eve their first mother, who believed the devil speaking through the serpent rather than God Himself." "Even nowadays, the most part of women imitate Eve in pride and unbelief; for it is well known that a girl of nine years old will go more curiously apparelled than a boy of eighteen; and when she is too old to dare to adorn herself, then will she follow pride and vain-glory in tricking out her daughter or her niece. So also will she busy herself more than a man in unbelief and enchantments; for any woman, by herself, knows more of such superstitions and charms than a hundred men"<sup>1</sup>.

His contemporary and fellow-Dominican, Sprenger, is still more emphatic<sup>2</sup>. Though he reprobates misogynistic speech, he enquires why women are more given to the unholy arts than men, and finds the reason first in their inferior intellect, secondly in their "greater carnality," and thirdly in their want of faith; which latter accusation he supports by a bold flight of imaginative etymology: "*dicitur enim femina a fe et minus, quia semper minorem habet et servat fidem*"—the Virgin Mary being, of course, a brilliant exception<sup>3</sup>. Lancre, who knew even more

<sup>1</sup> *Exempla*, S. vii; cf. *Sermones* xxxiv, P.

<sup>2</sup> *Malleus Maleficorum*, 1600, p. 96 ff. (pars 1, q. 6).

<sup>3</sup> The different rubrics with which Sprenger garnishes this section are worth rehearsing here as an indication of his general argument. "De malitia

about witches than Sprenger, if that be possible, is the most emphatic of the three; woman is more prone to witchcraft than man, by reason of that multiple inferiority of the sex "qui a meu aucuns Philosophes de mettre la femme entre l'homme et la beste brute"<sup>1</sup>.

In all this, the activity of popular imagination was restless and intense. The people had made the old fairy-stories; the people made the Mary-legends; monastic moralists wrote these down only when the stories had already made their mark<sup>2</sup>. One of the most charming is that of the miraculous chaplet<sup>3</sup>:

A certain noble had a wife devoted to God and St Mary; but they were childless. They besought God, of his mercy, for a son; the boy was born, and they nourished him with all possible care. When he came to years of discretion, and saw other boys weaving garlands of roses and other flowers, he did likewise, and bore them to the church and offered them to the blessed Virgin; and thus he did daily while the season favoured. When the time came that his parents would have found him a wife, he resisted with all his might, and offered his virginity to God and the blessed Virgin Mary, whom,

mulierum—Mulier necessarium malum, naturalis tentatio, etc.—Muliebrium vitiorum fundamentum est avaritia—Vituperationes mulierum ut intelligendae—Mulieres sunt incontinentes linguae—Eva [mutatur] in Ave—Mulieres minus valent intelligendo bona quam viri—Ex forma costae mulier contraria viro—Eva non credidit Deo, quia dixit *Forte*—Femina dicta a *fe* et *minus*—Mulieris proclivitas ad odia—Aemulatio et impatientsia mulierum—Felix per se, felicissimus si coelebs—Sine uxore solitudo, cum uxore solitudo—De uxore submersa [et] quaesita adverso flumine—Mulieres sunt vindicabiles—Natura sunt mulieres immorigerae... Aut blanditiis aut importunitate instigant viros mulieres—Omnia fere mundi regna propter mulieres eversa—Mundus sine mulieribus esset conversatio Deorum—Mulierem esse Chimaeram... Cur mulier amarior morte—Evae peccatum non induxisset mortem nisi Adam accessisset—Mulierum facies est ventus urens—Sagena cor mulierum, manus sunt vincula—Quatuor insatiabilia—Dicendum haeresis maleficarum, non maleficorum.

<sup>1</sup> P. 58; for the context, see appendix 24.

<sup>2</sup> Among the people I here count the simpler monks and lay-brethren who are protagonists in, or witnesses of, most of these miracles. Vast numbers of stories must have been current which the more official scribes never consecrated and recorded. Here and there, we can see the process of formation actually at work. St Douceline (d. 1255) was sister to the celebrated Franciscan Hugues de Digne; she became a Franciscan Tertiary, or Béguine; and, presently, she learned by special revelation that the B.V.M. had been the first Béguine in all history, even as she herself was the first Béguine in all Provence. It was revealed to her that the B.V.M. had always worn a black mantilla over her head; so, therefore, did St Douceline. (*Vie de Ste-D.* ed. J. H. Albanès, 1879, pp. 18, 20.) Compare, in appendix 19, the legend of the Mary-Child collected by the brothers Grimm.

<sup>3</sup> Herolt, *Promptuarium*, c. 69; Pfeiffer, *Marienlegenden*, p. 151.

as he said, he was minded to serve all his life long. Wherefore he became a monk, and profited in goodness of life from day to day. But, seeing that he could no longer follow his earlier custom of devotion (for he had neither roses nor flowers; and, being a monk, it was not lawful for him to busy himself with such things lest he should scandalize the brethren<sup>1</sup>) therefore he thought within his heart that he would say a hundred *Aves* daily, and thus make a garland for the blessed Mary; and thus he did with daily tears and purity of heart.

He was sent forth one day upon conventual business; a robber lurked in a thicket to kill him; at that moment the monk remembered that he had not yet said his daily *Aves*, and, dismounting, began to repeat them. The astonished robber saw a radiant lady come forward, who picked rose after rose that fell from the monk's lips, wound them with silver wire upon a golden circlet, and, when the hundred were completed, laid the chaplet upon her head, and "soared away over the heath." The robber, converted, became an excellent monk. It is one of the most graceful of all the Mary-legends, and most suggestive of that mass of variegated folk-tales from which these monkish collections were woven. Docile minds opened out to the sun under Mary's smiles; but there were others who hated the world they lived in, or at least the privileged classes who governed that world; there were men and women who regretted the banished gods of the past, and who materialized magic as their fellows materialized Mariolatry.

Nor was it only the unorthodox who hankered after this spice of paganism. One of the strangest products of medieval theology is the book of *Moralizations on Ovid*. This was generally ascribed to the Dominican Thomas Walleis, who was imprisoned by John XXII for daring to preach against that Pope's doctrine of the Retardation of the Beatific Vision, but who finally triumphed in the support of the University of Paris, and in John's deathbed recantation<sup>2</sup>. It is more probably by the Benedictine Pierre Berchoire, a man of even greater distinction in his day (1320-40). Such as it is, it fell into the hands of the authors of *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, who pilloried the

<sup>1</sup> He had joined the Cistercians, says the German version.

<sup>2</sup> See Rashdall, *Universities*, I, 529 ff.

writer, as Pascal pilloried Escobar, by the simple device of mock-admiring quotations<sup>1</sup>. Thomas compares Bacchus to Christ, "born of fire" and "twice-born," "handed over to the Nymphs (that is, to holy souls) in the Sacrament of the Altar." Jupiter's dealings with the nymph Callisto are compared to God's with the Virgin Mary; Pygmalion, in his successes and in his temptations, is likened to a typical religious preacher of the writer's day. The book had considerable success, and was frequently printed up to the middle of the sixteenth century. Indeed, a great deal of medieval religion differed from pagan thought neither in method nor, essentially, in final result; the main differences were in the names of things. All the witch-finders emphasize the exactitude with which necromancy modelled itself upon the rites of orthodoxy<sup>2</sup>. Against the noble figures who are commonly quoted as typical of medieval religion we must array these orgies of demonology, whether actually practised by the common people, not always without sacerdotal encouragement, or merely imagined by the lurid fancy of the inquisitor and his agents.

But, as I have tried to show already, neither of these extreme groups is so significant to the social student as that more colourless multitude which stands in between; colourless—in comparison, less easy to seize and fix upon paper, characterless in most of its manifestations, until some sudden flash illuminates a face or two—and therefore generally neglected. Let us think, for the moment, neither of these saints nor of those enormous sinners, but of our ordinary selves and the every-day figures that people our own lives, translated into terms of the past centuries. We need to visualize, not only that new and model

<sup>1</sup> See appendix 25. It is characteristic of Janssen's prejudice and superficiality that he attributes the blasphemies in this book to the authors of the *Epistolae*, though these writers specify quite plainly the source from which they quote, and a few minutes' trouble would have enabled Janssen to see that whatever shocks his moral sense is due not to the *Epistolae* but to Walleis or Berchoire. See *Epp. Obscur. Vir.* ed. Stokes (1909), p. 74. Janssen was probably writing here, as he very often did, at second or third hand; I deal with this in my third volume. Ovid was a favourite author with the monks; he occurs oftener, perhaps, in their library catalogues than any other classic; and specially two of his most amorous works, the *Metamorphoses* and the *Ars Amatoria*.

<sup>2</sup> See especially the concluding pages of Lancre, 399 ff. The writer is a real observer (e.g. his description of social life among the Basques, pp. 29 ff.) and it is of extraordinary interest to seek to unravel the actual from the imaginary in the evidence which he gives as to witches' sabbaths.

community of Bec where Anselm, after years of wandering, at last recognized a heaven upon earth, but, still more, the environment in which he would have lived and died if his father, like so many others, had thrust the boy into the monastery that happened to lie nearest or most convenient. Only thus can we attempt to answer that fundamental question: What differentiated the religion of the average monk from that of the professing Christian of our own days? There is but this one way of realizing social history, however imperfectly. We must first survey, one by one, the details which differentiate a past society from our own, and then transport ourselves in imagination among those strange surroundings. Our present friends would be cloistered there with us, and our competitors; our critics and, (if we have them,) our enemies. A small group would be very close to us indeed; almost intolerably close at times; from this monotonous omnipresence of half-a-dozen faces we could escape by no lawful means but by merging it in the omnipresence of God. If we might pick this our imaginary community from among those whom we have most respected in life, it would indeed be well with us; and some monks, here and there, did actually live in such a picked society. But generally, as we shall see, the choice was left very much to chance; therefore we must think rather of a fortuitous group within our own experience; say anything from a dozen to fifty men or women waiting on the platform with us for the next train<sup>1</sup>. In this group, if we are fortunate, there may be one or two of those who, going through this vale of misery, use it for a well; the quiet saint who has been through the trenches, the saint in cricketing-flannels, the saint who may sweep our room or till our garden or serve us across the counter of a shop. But the majority, as in every age, will have accepted the creed

<sup>1</sup> The dearth of clear and definite vocations made itself felt from very early times, as soon as more people could be found to leave money for their souls' health than to undertake a long life of real self-sacrifice. Only at very exceptional times or places did monasticism fulfil that requirement which Mr Hubert Handley quotes from C. H. Spurgeon in *The Modern Churchman* for Feb. 1921, p. 575: "If any man in this room could be content (instead of becoming a Baptist Minister) to be a newspaper editor or a grocer or a farmer or a doctor or a lawyer or a senator or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way. . . 'Do not enter the ministry if you can help it' was his sage advice."

of their own day rather mechanically. No doubt it will not be fair to judge them only by their silences, their inconsistencies, or even their self-contradictions; yet these things we must not fail to note, for they have their unmistakable significance. Very real was the true monk, ripened by years of discipline, strict to himself and kindly to others, radiant with spiritual cheerfulness behind all his avoidance of actual laughter; or again the true nun, placidly absorbed in worship and other daily duties, with her white transparent hands and her face of chiselled ivory. But these were always few; and writers who tell us otherwise have nearly always been inspired not by what they have actually found in contemporary documents, but by a dislike of the modern spirit, and an impatient conviction that things must somehow have been better in the distant past. I say this deliberately, as one whose sympathy with the intuitive side of Catholicism—the *foi du charbonnier*—has grown almost in proportion with a long experience of the ignorance and actual disingenuousness which characterizes a great deal of official Roman Catholic history in all countries.

Therefore I have tried to do justice to the ages to which these modern writers appeal when they seek to justify their Church's claim to a world-domination over modern thought. No man can expect to please all his readers, but I hope for least disapproval from those who are most familiar with my sources. If history is to have any real value for the world, it must strive to get down to those realities in which all readers are interested; for the old religious problems, amid all changes of name and circumstance, are eternally with us. The Agnostic conscientious objector of a few years ago, in so far as he truly and sincerely bore the reproach of his idealism and went forth to suffer without the camp, was the lineal descendant of those Jewish converts for whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. Mr H. G. Wells (in so far as he is a serious enquirer and not an opportunist special pleader) is the lineal descendant of hundreds who, in all ages, have tried to think out a God for themselves. And, in all ages, this God has been so far anthropomorphic that He has reflected the prevalent thought and manners of the time. The modern God who "doesn't take sides in questions of sexual relations" corresponds essentially, behind all his apparent con-

trasts, with the medieval God who loathed Jews, infidels and heretics scarcely less wholeheartedly than did the monk himself<sup>1</sup>. We must not be surprised, therefore, to find medieval religion strongly coloured by the imperfections and anomalies of a society which had destroyed one civilization and had scarcely yet succeeded in building another. Exceptional men fought their way upwards to a faith of great purity, just as exceptional intellects did a good deal to anticipate modern enlightenment. At the other extreme, thousands lived on in almost bestial indifference, equally impervious to abstractions intellectual or ethical, under cover of some sort of traditional or compulsory conformity with the services of the Church; such men differed rather outwardly than inwardly from the indifferentists of today. It is a truism, yet a truism sometimes ignored, that there never has been an age in which the Unseen has truly affected the vast majority of men in the way in which common material things affect them. Bread and cheese come first of all; when bread-and-cheese considerations are at all evenly balanced, the ideal may indeed come in and turn the whole scale, but seldom until then. Our evidence for this, for the Middle Ages, rests not only on the general judgements pronounced by zealous moralists upon the mass of their contemporaries, but also upon the still more significant testimony of casual and undesigned touches in history or fiction. Often enough, we find men who believed just enough in God to insult Him, and just enough in the devil to curse in his name. Such were our Rufus, Henry II in his wilder moods, John Lackland, Alberigo da Romano<sup>2</sup>, who treated God as a guttersnipe might treat a scripture-reader visiting his slum; or whole classes like the Irish and Welsh

<sup>1</sup> Of course we must not interpret modern enquirers too anthropomorphically; but, however impersonally we may conceive of God—if this God be no more than a certain Law of Existence—yet even such a Law must take cognizance of one of the most important of human relations, in the sense that it rewards certain thoughts or acts and punishes others. How far these rewards or punishments may tally with those proclaimed by present Church law or by ordinary social custom, is a very different question; and it is as fatal to introduce confusion from one side as from the other.

<sup>2</sup> Salimbene in *M.G.H. Scriptt.* vol. 32, p. 367: One day, as he was hawking, he lost a favourite falcon, and fell into such ungovernable fury that, after having wreaked the extremity of boorish disrespect upon God in heaven, he went home and desecrated the nearest altar, "thinking thus to take vengeance upon God."

robbers to whom More alludes<sup>1</sup>, and the priests who prostituted their sacraments to witchcraft, and the crowds who would revile a saint or beat his image in revenge for his failure to grant their special desire. Here is a thoroughly typical medieval scene. The monastery of Cella-Nova in Castile (where St Rudesind had collected a community, become its abbot, and found his grave), was oppressed by the king, who had set an unworthy abbot over it somewhere about 977. The monks

weeping and sobbing, fell on their bare knees before the Saint's tomb; and one, already decrepit, raised his crutch whereon he leaned and struck the tomb with these lamentable words of complaint: "Wherefore, Rudesind, hast thou brought us hither? Wherefore hast thou deceived us under a show of religion, which we now see to have been false in thee? Wherefore hast thou torn us from our homes, where we led lawful lives, to serve not God (as thou didst promise) but tyrants? If thou art a Saint, free us now."<sup>2</sup>

That night the unworthy abbot "sleeping in his bed after supper, burst asunder in the midst and gave up the ghost." While the most docile believers thought thus of their "divi," the mass of society caught at frequent excuses to treat God and saint and devil as a joke—so long as death did not loom too near.

A certain cleric, having lost at dice his whole possessions save five shillings only, began to vow himself to the devil and blaspheme God, promising those five shillings to any man who would teach him how most to offend God<sup>3</sup>.

Truth, says Bromyard, is dying out among preachers and counsellors in these "modern" days, because lords punish the too truthful servant, prelates and superiors silence the too truthful Religious, and good men weary of this uphill fight. But such weariness is sinful; the man who thus compromises

is like unto a certain jongleur, who is said to have come to a great man's hall and asked for meat and drink. To whom the doorkeeper

<sup>1</sup> *English Works*, p. 198 (*Med. Garner*, p. 706), "And commonly in the wild Irish, and some in Wales too, as men say, when they go forth in robbing, they bless them and pray God send them good speed, that they may meet with a good purse and do harm and take none. Shall we therefore find a fault with everyman's prayer because men pray for speed in robbery?"

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. v, p. 530; his note refers to a similar incident in the Miracles of St Fructuosus; cf. Glaber in P.L. vol. 142, col. 637; *Med. Garner*, p. 5; and Chapter xv of this present book. In Myrc's *Festial*, p. 14, it is even a Jew who compels St Nicholas to do his will by beating his image.

<sup>3</sup> Giraldus Cambrensis, R.S. II, 322.



said, "To what lord dost thou belong?" "I am God's man," quoth he. "Nay," said that other, but if thou have none other lord than that, thou comest not in hither!" The jongleur, hearing this, said, "Then am I the devil's man!" whereat they received him gladly, as a good fellow<sup>1</sup>.

This is thoroughly characteristic of one side of the Middle Ages; these are the men who vexed the righteous souls of their own day, as the same sort of men, under different forms, vex righteous Catholic souls of today. But there was much healthy and simple religious feeling also, of the kind that may be found in the mountain villages of modern Switzerland, whether Protestant or Catholic—a religious feeling strikingly similar in its essential characteristics, in spite of formal differences of creed. No educated and thoughtful person of the Middle Ages was wholly a stranger to the rich heritage of Jewish and early Christian tradition, however the worshipper might emphasize the perishable over the imperishable elements, and however deeply he might have overlaid even these elements with pagan or semi-pagan superstitions. Thus in the domain of pure thought, as elsewhere, the Church may truly be called the main civilizing influence of the Middle Ages. For on the whole, when all is told, the human mind deals with spiritual as with bodily food; there is a slow but steady assimilation of the good, with a corresponding elimination of the evil; and the spiritual food of the Middle Ages contained (it is generally admitted) much of the best that has ever been thought and written by man. The world will never let go the idea of a Great Un-Self to which the Self can struggle upwards; every healthy soul does, in some form or another, *pray*. Those who analyze not only externals, but their own thoughts also, are conscious of Something which at one time rebukes our spirit, at another time raises and comforts it; something in harmony with which we find our own harmony—*e la sua voluntate è nostra pace*. Those who worship This as a Person, and those others who willingly accept it as a Law, may alike find in it their fulness of life and liberty; and, in those moments of relief when we feel most truly ourselves, all men may cry as whole-heartedly as the Psalmist: "my soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers." For this surrender of

<sup>1</sup> *Sum. Praed.* v, i, 9.

the Self to the Un-Self is as psychologically as it is theologically true. When a man says to us, "I love you"—and we see in his eyes that he loves us—"and therefore I tell you plainly that you have done wrong"—there is then between us something which cannot be expressed in mere terms of the sum of thoughts or words on either side; something for which the most modern thinker, if he dares to face the facts, will scarcely find any single word so accurate as *God*. Whether by action or by reaction, that God must be conceived and expressed in terms of imperfect culture. Whether a certain idea of God has formed the modern thinker, or the thinker has formed a God after his own image, or both together, in any case the God and his servant are inevitably akin. The twentieth-century Deity is perhaps over-mechanical and too democratically commonplace; certainly, however, it was a feudal God who dominated the Middle Ages. He had too often the caprice, the cruelty, and even the superb unconscious ignorance of a feudal lord. The Lady came into the Court of Heaven to soften this. But she herself had definite feminine failings; and the rest of that feudal-religious household of minor divinities—*divus* was the word adopted at once by orthodox writers of the Renaissance—tailed off into creatures hardly distinguishable from Ovid's nymphs and fauns. The story of what went on under patronage of the monks of St Valery—a story which Sir Thomas More does not venture to deny—is quite unprintable here<sup>1</sup>. The cults of Master John Schorn, who conjured the devil into a boot, and of Maid Uncumber, are almost equally grotesque; even at St Paul's Cathedral the *femmes incomprises* of More's day offered oats before this bearded she-saint "because they reckon that for a peck of oats she will not fail to uncumber them of their husbands"<sup>2</sup>.

There is another side of medieval religion which has been too much ignored; the extent to which it flogged the willing horse. That temptation besets all religious enthusiasts, always and everywhere, whether they be sacerdotal and collectivist, or individual revivalists. The stimulus which is thought necessary for a hardened conscience will often drive a sensitive soul to distraction; and this may be seen in the effects of the Great

<sup>1</sup> See his *English Works*, pp. 194 ff. (Dialogue, bk II, ch. 10-11).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; see appendix 26.

Schism (1378-1417). Even to the present moment, the Roman Church has not pronounced authoritatively between these rivals who claimed each to be a true pope, yet of whom the majority must admittedly have been pretenders. At the time, those uncertainties seared the common man's conscience—why should he fret himself about a question which his betters could not decide?—but they drove saints almost into religious frenzy. St Catharine of Siena pleaded passionately for Urban VI's title; he alone was "Christ upon earth"; Clement was a mere pretender, of whose ministrations God and His angels would say *I know them not*. A saint of equal influence in that day, the Spaniard Vincent Ferrer, was still more certain on the opposite side, and brought all Spain round to Clement. With every reinforcement of scholastic logic, he insisted not only that Clement was the only true pope but that (apart from cases of invincible ignorance), no supporter of Urban could escape from hell<sup>1</sup>. What availed, then, the most absolute and unquestioning faith in Mary or in Transubstantiation, so long as the unhappy Catholic could not distinguish between true and false pope in

<sup>1</sup> *De Moderno Ecclesiae Schismate* (Rome, Pustet, n.d., but editor's preface dated 1900), pp. 96-100, 180. St Vincent writes: "To make up our minds as to which of the two we are to believe in as true Pope, is now a necessity of salvation." He answers the objection: "There are in the world many simple and unlearned folk who understand naught of this matter, and who hope to be saved by their good deeds in the faith of Christ; and it would seem too hard a saying that all such would be damned." "If" (he says) "the notification of the Cardinals [of Clement's party] have not reached these folk, they are excused, unless this be through their own negligence. But if they have received, in clear form, this notice of the Cardinals concerning the papacy, and definitely do not believe it, there can be no doubt that they are in mortal sin and in a state of damnation. . . . It is objected that almost all the children and common folk, with very many devout persons both of the regular and secular clergy, and many princes and doctors hold with the said Bartholomew [*i.e.* Urban VI], not believing the [French] Cardinals when they speak against him. But we must say that all these men's opinions are as snares of the devil to deceive unwary souls; and yet, even as in the early days of the Church no man was excused from faith in Christ by the multitude of doctors or other persons whatsoever who opined against the preaching of the Apostles (as it is said, Matt. x, 14, 'Whosoever shall not receive you . . . it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the Day of Judgement than for that city'), so certainly these folk are in no way excused from firmly and definitely believing and obeying Pope Clement by reason of any others whatsoever who opine contrary to the Cardinals' notification concerning him." The book was apparently withdrawn from the market within a few weeks of its publication in 1900; I found it impossible to buy a copy, and owe my knowledge of it to a friend.

Urban or Clement? Indecision between two indistinguishable popes was thus made into heresy, even as an obstinate adherence to the actual Rule of St Francis had long been heretical<sup>1</sup>. Such heresies as these, in the nature of things, could be suppressed, if at all, only by force; here, then, comes the last of those elements of internal corruption in medieval religion.

The first I have dealt with at greatest length, since it is perhaps the most fundamental, and certainly the least comprehensible to the modern mind without a wealth of actual documentary detail. Christian competition with paganism, especially in demonology and thaumaturgy, resulted in a gradual paganization of Christianity. Origen, Augustine, Gregory and other great men admit, not only that the evidential force of miracles in religion is, at best, only secondary, but also (even more important here) that genuine miracles were becoming a steadily decreasing quantity as Christian history wore on. Yet, side by side with these admissions, weaker men insist (and Gregory himself in his weaker moments insists) on exploiting the miraculous to its fullest possibilities. The indecision of these great men is an index of greater confusions and discordances in the popular mind; miracles are a remedy to disbelief, but this multiplication of miracles soon produces a sum-total under which faith itself begins to stagger<sup>2</sup>. Medieval records thus show us a steady crescendo of disquietude, as thought becomes more active; honest faith is often sadly distracted between superstition and unbelief; the hysterical fear of witchcraft as an all-corroding, ubiquitous, anti-social force begins about a century before the Reformation.

The second fatal corruption was the process by which the idea of Church was narrowed down. From its original significance of the whole body of the faithful, it was gradually confined practically to the official clergy, and finally, under the growth of absolutist theories, to the single person of the Pope: *l'état c'est moi*. This gives to the Church all the vulnerability of a despotic state; and, when the pope is suspected as heretic or as a pretender, the whole body ecclesiastic is paralyzed.

<sup>1</sup> See vol. II of this work.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. More's *English Works*, p. 200, "This is well said (quoth he) but yet alway it runneth in men's minds that miracles may be feigned," etc.

These inward weaknesses in the religious community necessitated the stiffening of the outer shell. If men cannot otherwise believe in our miracles or in our Pope, then they must be forced to believe. The most definite justification of that final revolt against medieval religion is to be found in the fact that, during at least the last four centuries of its reign, persecution had become not rarer and milder, but more frequent and more cruel. There was the same fundamental fallacy here as in the parallel stimulus of the miracle; the thing finally stultified itself; kill men for belief's sake, and others, asking themselves whether such cruelties must needs be, will begin to doubt of those very things which are your excuse for these murders.

Let us not stress all this unduly; but we must not altogether ignore it. If it be urged that modern civilization still conceals a mass of superstitions and cruelties, let us answer: "Yes, *conceals!*" Out of ten superstitions that openly proclaimed themselves in St Bernard's day, nine at least are now either dead, or shamefaced and apologetic. If the modern man of science sometimes, like the schoolman, begs nine-tenths of some important question, yet at least he does it furtively, or in the self-deception of naïve thoughtlessness. No English-speaking man of More's character and ability—no man, indeed, with even a third-rate reputation to lose—would venture, in this year of grace, to put his name to the arguments by which More justified the burning of heretics. It is necessary to insist upon these commonplaces, so long as they are so steadily ignored. Professional prejudice—and, often, an almost incredible professional ignorance—have been responsible for very false pictures of medieval life since the romantic revival; and this false balance must, some day or other, be deliberately redressed. There are moments at which the historian's work must be mainly negative; truth necessitates just proportion; and any period of slow distortion calls inevitably for a briefer consequent period of unsparing rectification. In this work we need a guiding principle; and none can be simpler or more certain than Christ's golden rule—By their fruits ye shall know them.

The question of every calling, every school, and every profession is not what it teaches, but the kind of men it produces... So with the Christian Church. The supreme practical question is what kind

of people does she make; all individuals are largely a product of their society<sup>1</sup>.

The medieval church produced men of all kinds, and all kinds must be taken into account when we would comprehend her action upon society. In some respects—this must be added here to counterbalance the picture of the foregoing chapters—in some very important respects medieval religion was far less narrow than modern Catholicism, whether Roman or Anglican. Medieval Catholicism was the resultant of *all* the ideas of the society of its own day, working theoretically, it is true, within very strict trammels, but in practice working more loosely than theory would have prescribed. Therefore, it was easy for a group of thinkers to pursue certain obvious trains of thought before it was quite realized how far these explorations would logically lead; moreover, even when the danger was clearly seen, and even when authority stepped definitely forward to check them, the seed had been sown, and we must not assume that even the most abject medieval abjurations meant necessarily a change of inward mind. Nicholas de Ultricuria, at the University of Paris, put forward a series of propositions from which he “appears to have felt all the philosophic doubts which, as developed by Berkeley and Hume, all subsequent Philosophy has been seeking either to confirm or to remove.” In 1346 he was compelled to recant publicly and to burn his writings; in 1348 he became Dean of the Cathedral Church of Metz; but who will venture to say that his philosophic doubts were thereby removed?<sup>2</sup> There is far more free enquiry in Aquinas, for his time, than in many of his modern descendants<sup>3</sup>. For, it must be repeated, whereas the Catholic of today is a man of a certain definite type of mind, or a man moulded by certain rather exceptional circumstances, the Catholics of the Middle Ages were men of almost every type and experience. Yet, amid all variety, medieval Catholicism had certain definite characteristics, and its two great weaknesses, as I have indicated, were those of superstition and intolerance.

Both these solvent forces characteristic of medieval religion

<sup>1</sup> J. N. Figgis, *Civilisation at the Cross-Roads*, 1913, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> See *Nicholas de Ultricuria, a Medieval Hume*, by Dr H. Rashdall (*Proc. Aristotelian Soc.* 1907).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. *Sum. Theol.* pars 1, q. 2, *De Deo an sit.*

are, in a double sense, still more characteristically monastic. It is not only that, in the large majority of cases, they come out most clearly from monastic records, but also that it was the Religious—next, perhaps, to the group-conscience of the unlearned but fervent laity—who had most to do with fashioning them. All the most distinctive features of the medieval creed are written largest in monasticism; and in this sense Renan's epigram is quite true; the Christian *par excellence*, as those ages understood Christianity, is the monk.

We can therefore end this chapter on a less negative note. I have already referred to many sources from which the reader may compose a picture of what was purest in the monastic creed; let me now conclude with two direct quotations from St Benedict's Rule. Here, we come to the saint under whose cowl many men lived their earthly life in proleptic fruition of heaven, many others as food for hell-fire, and the great majority in something like that same halting between two opinions which has marked human nature in all ages; looking more or less steadily to the next world, but unwilling to forgo all hold of this present<sup>1</sup>. The Benedictine Rule is a work of deep piety and saving common-sense; it is characteristically medieval, designed to meet conditions which were more prevalent then than in classical or in modern times. From the opening words of that Rule, and from its concluding sentences, we may take a measure of medieval religion at its best, and thence pass on to consider how men followed the Master's prescriptions. These two passages form by far the fullest and most sustained spiritual exhortations in the whole book.

(i) *Prologue*:

Hearken, O Son, to the precepts of thy Master, and incline the ear of thy heart, gladly receiving thy loving Father's admonition and fulfilling it effectually; that thou mayest return through the labour of obedience to Him from whom thou hadst departed through the sloth of disobedience. To thee, therefore, is my speech now directed, whosoever thou art who hast renounced thine own will and dost take up the strong and shining arms of obedience, that thou mayest fight for the Lord Christ, our true king.

First, pray most earnestly that He may perfect all that thou

<sup>1</sup> "My great difficulty," said C. H. Spurgeon, "is the neutral man—the half-and-half." But such are most of us, at every stage of the world's history.

beginnest of good; in order that He, who hath now vouchsafed to count us among His children, may never be grieved at our evil deeds. For it is our duty, at all times, so to obey Him with the good that He hath placed within us, that He may not only never disinherit us as an angry father disinheriteth his sons, but also that He may never, as a dreadful Lord provoked at our sins, give us over to perpetual torment as wicked servants who would not follow Him to glory.

Now at last, therefore, let us arise; for Scripture awaketh us, saying: "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep." And, opening our eyes to the divine light, let our startled ears receive those words which God's voice crieth aloud for our daily admonition: "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts"; and again: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." For how saith He? "Come ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord"; and again: "Walk while ye have the light, lest the darkness of death come upon you." And the Lord saith again (seeking among the multitude of the people His own servant upon whom he calleth thus): "What man is he that desireth life and loveth many days, that he may see good?" And if thou, hearing this, dost answer: "I am he," then saith God unto thee: "If thou wilt have true and everlasting life, keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it; for when thou shalt do thus, Mine eyes shall be upon you, and Mine ears shall be open unto your prayers; and before thou callest upon Me, I will answer '*Here am I.*'" What could be sweeter, dear brethren, than this voice of the Lord inviting us? Lo, in His pity He sheweth us the way of life. Let us therefore gird our loins with faith, or with the observance of good deeds, and let us follow in His ways as the Gospel leadeth us, that we may deserve to see in His own Kingdom Him who hath called us.

For, if we will dwell in the tabernacle of His Kingdom, we can by no means come thither except we walk in good works. But let us, with the Psalmist, say unto the Lord: "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle, or who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" Unto which request, brethren, let us hear our Lord answering, and showing us the way to that same tabernacle, and saying: "He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; he that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour." That man [shall see God] who, when the wicked devil would persuade him, hath cast him and his persuasions away from the sight of his heart, and hath set him at nought, and hath dashed his newborn thoughts against that Rock [which is Christ]<sup>1</sup>. Those again who,

<sup>1</sup> A mystical exposition of Ps. cxxxvi, 9, Vulg. which is common in medieval writers, with farther reference to 1 Cor. x, 4.



fearing the Lord, are not puffed up with their good observance, but, knowing that even the good in themselves cannot be done by themselves but by the Lord, do therefore magnify Him who worketh in them, saying with the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give I glory." Even as the apostle Paul also imputed nought of his own preaching unto himself, but said, "By the grace of God I am what I am"; and, again: "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Wherefore the Lord also saith in His gospel: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." The Lord, fulfilling these things, expecteth daily that we should answer with our deeds to these His holy warnings. Wherefore the days of this life are granted unto us as a respite that we should amend the evil<sup>1</sup>, as the Apostle saith: "Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" For the merciful Lord saith: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

Therefore, my brethren, having asked the Lord concerning him who shall dwell in His tabernacle, we have heard His command as to such a dwelling; but, if we fulfil our duty as dwellers, we shall be heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore we must prepare our hearts and bodies to fight for the holy obedience of these commands; and, wheresoever nature hath the less ability in us, let us beseech the Lord to command His grace to give us help. And if we wish to flee the pains of hell and to attain unto life eternal, we must so run and work now, while there is yet time, and we are yet in this body, and we are free to fulfil all these things by this way of light, that it may be to our everlasting profit.

Wherefore we must constitute a school of the Lord's service, in which institution we hope that we shall constitute nothing harsh or grievous. But, even though it result in some small measure of restriction, at the bidding of reason and justice, for the amendment of faults or the conservation of mutual love, do not thou on that account shrink in fear and flee from the way of salvation. For none can enter thereupon but by a narrow beginning; but, as our conversation and our faith proceed, and as our hearts open wider, then do we walk in the way of God's commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love; so that, never straying from Him who is our Master, but cleaving unto His teaching in our monastery until the day of death, we may so participate in Christ's sufferings through patience as to deserve to become partners in His kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> Or, "for amendment of evil men."

(ii) Having thus fixed his disciple's attention, and continued with 72 chapters of detailed prescriptions for this dedicated life, St Benedict adds a 73rd chapter of final exhortation:

We have written this Rule in order that, by keeping it in our monasteries, we may in some measure show ourselves to possess either honest manners or the beginnings of right conversation. But, for those who press on to a perfect conversation, there are the teachings of the holy Fathers, in keeping whereof a man is led to the height of perfection. For what page is there, or what discourse of divine authority in the Old or New Testament, which is not a most exact rule for man's life? Or what book is there of the holy catholic Fathers which doth not sound this warning, that we should come straight unto our Creator? Moreover, the Collations of the Fathers and their Institutes and Lives<sup>1</sup>, together with the Rule of our holy father Basil, what are all these but ensamples for well-living and obedient monks, and instruments of virtue? But upon us, if we are slothful and evil-livers and negligent, confusion falleth and shame.

Thou therefore, whosoever thou art, who dost press on towards the heavenly country, do thou fulfil this Rule that I have written, the very least beginning [of virtue], with Christ's help; and then at last shalt thou go on, God protecting thee, to those greater heights of learning and of virtue whereof we have spoken above.

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* John Cassian's *Collationes* and *Instituta*.

## CHAPTER XII

### ST BENEDICT

BENEDICT's life was related, vividly but too briefly, by Gregory the Great, who wrote some fifty years after his hero's death. He tells us that he obtained his information in general from four abbots who had been St Benedict's scholars; and for one anecdote he expressly claims the authority of one of these abbots, then still living. This *Life* forms the second book of St Gregory's *Dialogues*; it has been published in English, from a translation of 1608, by Dom E. J. Luck, O.S.B. (Washbourne, 1880). The whole four books of this old translation have also been printed, in a sumptuous illustrated volume, by Prof. E. G. Gardner for the Medici Press.

The saint was of a good family of Nursia, in the Umbrian Apennines. Born about 480 A.D., he was educated at Rome; but, disgusted at the immorality of that city, he broke away and went home. At the age of twenty or thereabouts, he began a life of ascetic devotion; first, in a cave some five miles from Subiaco in the Sabine hills; then in another cave even nearer to Subiaco. His life here was so wild and solitary that it needed a miracle to remind him of Easter Day; and that, when

certain shepherds found him in that same cave, at the first, when they espied him through the bushes and beheld his apparel made of skins, they verily thought that it had been some beast; but, after they were acquainted with the servant of God, many of them were, by his means, converted from their beastly life to grace, piety and devotion. And thus his name in the country thereabout became famous; and many, after this, went to visit him, and for corporeal meat, which they brought him, they carried away spiritual food for their souls. (Ch. 1.)

There were monks hard by, but apparently with no settled rule; and certainly we get a most unfavourable idea of contemporary monasticism in Italy from the opening sentences of the first chapter of St Benedict's Rule. After speaking of Coenobites and Anchorites, the saint there continues:

But the third kind of monks, a most evil kind, is that of the Sarabaites<sup>1</sup>, who, not approved by any Rule under the mastery of experience, like unto gold in the furnace, but rather softened after the nature of lead, lie notoriously to God through their [monastic] tonsure, while in their works they yet pay homage to the world. Such men are enclosed in their own folds (I will not say, in the Lord's fold) by twos and threes, or even singly and without any shepherd; their only law is the pleasure of their own desires; since they give the name of *holy* to all things which they themselves think and choose; and, whatsoever they desire not, that they condemn as unlawful. Moreover there is a fourth sort, called Vagabonds [*Gyrovagi*], who spend their whole lives in lodging, for three or four days at a time, from one province and one cell to another; ever wandering and never settled, slaves to their own pleasures and to the enticements of gluttony, and worse in every respect than the Sarabaites; of whose utterly miserable way of life it is better to keep silence than to speak.

There was no need for these emphatic words, in what is above all things a document of instruction and edification, if the Saint had not been speaking from his own experience, and contemplating possible dangers. For his own victories brought him, as they often do, fresh and harder fights (ch. 2, 3). He was haunted in his cave, as Bernard later on in his cloister, by the memory of a girl whom he had known in the world; wherefore, seeing many thick briars and nettle-bushes to grow hard by, off he cast his apparel, and threw himself into the midst of them, and there wallowed so long, that when he rose up all his flesh was pitifully torn; and so by the wounds of his body he cured the wounds of his soul, . . . When this great temptation was thus overcome, the man of God, like unto a piece of ground well tilled and weeded, of the seed of virtue brought forth plentiful store of fruit; and by reason of the great report of his wonderful holy life, his name became very famous. Not far from the place where he remained there was a monastery, the Abbot whereof was dead: whereupon the whole Convent came unto the venerable man, Bennet, entreating him very earnestly that he would vouchsafe to take upon him the charge and government of their Abbey: long time he denied them, saying that their manners were diverse from his, and therefore that they should never agree together; yet at length, overcome with their entreaty, he gave his consent. Having now taken upon him the charge of the Abbey, he took order that regular life should be observed, so that none of them could, as before they used, through

<sup>1</sup> A term found already in Cassian (*Coll.* xviii, 4, 6, 7), and Jerome (*Ep.* xxii, 34).

unlawful acts decline from the path of holy conversation, either on the one side or on the other: which the monks perceiving, they fell into a great rage, accusing themselves that ever they desired him to be their abbot, seeing their crooked conditions could not endure his virtuous kind of government: and therefore when they saw that under him they could not live in unlawful sort, and were loath to leave their former conversation, and found it hard to be enforced with old minds to meditate and think upon new things, and because the life of virtuous men is always grievous to those that be of wicked conditions, some of them began to devise how they might rid him out of the way: and therefore, taking counsel together, they agreed to poison his wine; which being done, and the glass wherein that wine was, according to the custom, offered to the Abbot to bless, he, putting forth his hand, made the sign of the cross, and straightway the glass, that was holden far off, brake in pieces, as though the sign of the cross had been a stone thrown against it: upon which accident the man of God by-and-by perceived that the glass had in it the drink of death, which could not endure the sign of life: and therefore rising up, with a mild countenance and quiet mind he called the monks together, and spake thus unto them: "Almighty God have mercy upon you, and forgive you: why have you used me in this manner? Did not I tell you beforehand, that our manner of living could never agree together? Go your ways, and seek ye out some other Father suitable to your own conditions, for I intend not now to stay any longer amongst you."

Benedict, then, went back to his cave; but his virtues and miracles brought him now so many disciples that he was able to found in those wild regions twelve abbeys, in each of which were twelve monks and an abbot<sup>1</sup>. Benedict was father-abbot to this whole congregation; and many nobles sent their children to him "to be brought up for Almighty God"<sup>2</sup>. But here his

<sup>1</sup> In memory, of course, of Christ and His apostles. This most ancient Benedictine (and probably pre-Benedictine) tradition is strangely ignored by Cardinal Gasquet, who accuses Thomas Cromwell of having introduced this same number-limit into the first Bill of Suppression as a mere *ad captandum* trick; and who insinuates that the choice of the number 12, as marking a distinction between good and bad monasteries, "was very probably suggested to the framers of the measure by the terms of the papal bull of 1528" (*Henry VIII and the Eng. Monasteries*, 1888, I, 308). This accusation against Cromwell is all the more absurd, since this sacred number of 12 not only occurs in St Benedict's life, but is also one of the most constant factors in later monastic history, and even a technical term was coined for it: a monastery of 12 or more was often called "conventual," in contradistinction to smaller and therefore less regular houses.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* to be brought up as monks; modern scholars of all parties agree now that the schoolboys of Benedict's Rule are future monks, and that we

success brought him persecution again; this time, from a neighbouring priest, Florentius by name, who first sent him a poisoned loaf and, then, in more devilish fashion, attempted to poison his community (ch. 8):

and for that purpose he sent into the yard of the abbey before their eyes seven naked young women, which did there take hands together, play, and dance a long time before them: to the end that by this means they might inflame their minds to sinful lust: which damnable sight the holy man beholding out of his cell, and fearing the danger which thereby might ensue to his younger monks, and considering that all this was done only for the persecuting of himself, he gave place to envy; and therefore, after he had for those abbeys and oratories which he had there built appointed governors, and left some under their charge, himself, in the company of a few monks, removed to another place.

"He changed his abode," continues Gregory, "but not his enemy." His new choice was Monte Cassino, a steep hill standing forth from the Apennines and rising some 1500 feet above the little town of San Germano, about midway on the great high road from Rome to Naples. Here he settled his disciples, no longer in a group of small houses, but in a single large monastery, which they built partly with their own hands. The site had been a temple of Apollo, in which the peasants of the neighbourhood still practised the pagan rites of their forefathers. The traditional date of this foundation is 529; here he composed his Rule. Three great historical events, therefore, are almost contemporaneous; the closing of the philosophical schools of Athens by Justinian; his codification of Roman law in the form in which it has survived to our day; and the definitive organization of Western monachism. Benedict died in 543; the rest of his life, in Gregory's *Dialogues*, is mainly a collection of miracles, which have little interest except so far as they indicate how he lived after his own Rule. For the Rule was, in fact, his life; Gregory says very truly (ch. 36): "If any man will enquire more curiously into his character and his life, he may find every act of his governance in that Rule which he instituted; for the holy man

have no evidence of his keeping school for outside boys. This is clearly recognized by Abbot Butler on p. 322; yet this does not prevent his quoting with high approval, on p. 375, a passage in which Newman repeats the old untenable assertion that St Benedict's school contained "lay-boys, destined for the world." I deal with monastic schools in my second volume.

could not teach otherwise than he lived." In these illustrative anecdotes of Gregory's, apart from that continuous tinge of miracle on which the most orthodox Roman Catholic is permitted to use his private judgement, we see the pains Benedict took to live as an example to his brethren (ch. 4); how he set the converted barbarian to work (ch. 6); his insight into men's thoughts (ch. 12, 20); and his anxiety that the monks should confine themselves as far as possible within their own precincts; it needed a special miracle to compel him to spend the one night he ever passed outside his monastery, in converse with his sister St Scholastica (ch. 34; cf. 12 and 13).

How, indeed, should a monk be safe outside his monastery, seeing that it was the main aim of his life to cut himself off from that world which lay outside? We have seen that the world, in general, was the devil's; Benedict and his brethren doubted as little of the demons around them as they doubted of the God above them. When the saint seized upon the temple of Apollo on Monte Cassino and made it into a Christian chapel; when he shattered the idol, cast down the altar, and burned the sacred grove in which the people had "sweated in their sacrilegious sacrifices" from time immemorial, then he found himself exposed to greater trials than he had endured from the priest Florentius, "by so much the greater, as he now found the Master of Iniquity himself fighting openly against him." For

the old enemy of mankind, not taking this in good part, did, not now privily or in a dream, but in open sight, present himself to the eyes of that holy father, and with great outcries complained that he had offered him violence. The noise which he made the monks did hear, but himself they could not see: but, as the venerable father told them, he appeared visibly unto him most fell and cruel, and as though, with his fiery mouth and flaming eyes, he would have torn him in pieces: what the devil said unto him all the monks did hear; for first he would call him by his name, and because the man of God vouchsafed him not any answer, then would he fall a-reviling and railing at him: for when he cried out, calling him, "Blessed Bennet," and yet found that he gave him no answer, straightway he would turn his tune, and say: "Cursed Bennet, and not blessed: what hast thou to do with me? and why dost thou thus persecute me?"

Here, as elsewhere in monastic literature, the monk always feels himself a special target for the devil's arrows. As God's

soldier, specially enlisted and sworn, he wore a uniform which in itself was a provocation to all the fiends of hell. We have evidence that, among the rural populations especially, there was often a considerable sense of good-fellowship towards the ancient demons; the parson, indeed, was their professional enemy, but that was his own affair; the ordinary rustic saw no reason for giving unnecessary offence to the devil. He regarded the circumambient fiends very much as the legendary schoolboy essayist described the horse: "it is an animal with very hard hoofs; but, unless provoked, will seldom do so." That was the worldly attitude; and that is why the monk retired from the world; but his retirement brought him into more open, though less dangerous, conflict with the powers of darkness. The four books of Gregory's *Dialogues* are one long anti-diabolic epic, in which the most exciting episodes are these single combats between monk or cleric and devil. All volcanoes were so many mouths of hell; and Theodoric the Goth had been cast visibly into that of Lipari by his victims Pope John and Symmachus the Senator; the scene was described to the grandfather-in-law of a friend of Gregory's by a hermit of the Lipari islands who had seen it with his own eyes (bk iv, c. 31). The devil entered into one monk's cell as a snake; to St Benedict he appeared as a doctor, and poisoned one of the senior monks of the community; but the saint was equal to the occasion: he "only gave him one slap and forthwith drove the evil spirit from him, so that he dared not return unto him again"<sup>1</sup>. Devils frequently beset the death-bed of righteous men; this terror was one form of purgatory (iv, 48-9). The whole world was hopeless: "I know not what goeth on in other parts of the world"—so writes Gregory after alluding to the Lombard invasions of his own Italy—"for in this land wherein we dwell the world doth not so much announce, as visibly show, its own last end." And it is under this sense of extreme necessity that he writes his fourth and last book; his interlocutor begs him now to recite a series of after-death miracles, "because I observe that many who are within the bosom of Holy Church doubt of the soul's life after the death of the body...in order that those who are now in

<sup>1</sup> II, 30: "solum illi alapam dedit": Father Luck's translator has softened this down out of respect for the saint.



suspicion may learn that the soul doth not in truth end with the body" (III, 38). Upon this follows the fourth book, which may be said to have fixed the Roman doctrine of Purgatory. Though this latter evidence does not refer directly to Benedict's day, but to Gregory's half a century later, yet our earlier indications tend to show that Benedict also had retired from much the same world of paganism and despair. It is one of the most remarkable things in Gregory's life that, with all his idealism and other-worldliness, he showed himself one of the greatest business-men of his day; and that his conviction of the world's imminent destruction did not prevent his labouring as few men have ever laboured to better it. We may say much the same of Benedict. This man who, if he could return to earth, would probably be far less astonished by any modern invention than by the fact that the world had outlasted his own day by nearly 1400 years, and who made no allowance for the growth of his Order during those centuries after his death, did nevertheless build so solidly that his fabric proved one of the most enduring things in history. What carried him to success, and inspired other brave men in those terrible times, was the combination, rare in all ages, of idealism and common-sense: the preponderance of true spiritual faith over inherited superstition. Among readers of Gregory's *Dialogues*, those who feel least sympathy with his childish hankering for miracles which are sometimes very trivial, will nevertheless see both in him and in his heroes certain fundamental human qualities which are as admirable to this day as they ever were. We may take, for instance, that monk of extreme charity who yet outwitted the subtlest of his beggars (III, 14); or, better still, Datius bishop of Milan, who turned the laugh against the devil (III, 4). On a mission to Constantinople Datius had to lodge at Corinth, where no accommodation could be found for him and his suite but in a haunted house. Satan made night hideous by imitating a chorus of wild and unclean beasts:

the roaring of lions, bleating of sheep, braying of asses, hissings of snakes, squeaking of pigs and mice... Then Datius, suddenly aroused from his sleep by so great a clamour of beasts, rose in vehement wrath, and cried aloud against that Ancient Enemy, saying: "Wretch! thou art rewarded according to thy deserts: for

thou art he who once said *I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most High* (Is. xiv, 14); and lo! through thy pride thou hast been made like unto swine and mice; and thou, who didst unworthily set thyself to imitate God, art now driven to thy fit office of imitating the brute beasts"<sup>1</sup>. The Evil Spirit was put to confusion by this crushing retort; which confusion he testified by never more entering into that house, to display his wonted marvels. And thus it became thenceforth the abode of the faithful; since the entrance of one truly faithful Christian had straightway driven out this lying and faithless spirit.

That is the keynote of the book. "Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Gregory, writing it, was homesick for the cloister; in his Prologue, as in that to his *Moralizations on Job* and elsewhere, the great Pope breathes forth his passionate regret for the quietude of soul that he had lost by coming forth to serve his fellow-men<sup>2</sup>:

One day, overburdened with the troubles of worldly folk, I sought a secret place that was friendly to my grief. When I had long sat here in silence and in affliction, my beloved son Peter the Deacon came in unto me, he who has been bound to me from his earliest youth by dear familiarity, and who is now my fellow-searcher in the Holy Scriptures. Seeing the grievous sickness that burned within my heart, he asked what new thing had befallen, to vex me with this more than wonted grief. To whom I made answer: "O Peter, this is my daily grief, ever old by habit and ever new in its increase. For my unhappy soul throbs with the galling sore of worldly occupations, and looks fondly back upon those past days in the monastery; remembering how, in those days, her wonted thoughts were all of heaven, and how, even though caged in the body, she soared free from that fleshly prison; nay, how she loved death itself (which to almost all men is a pain) as the entrance into life and the crown of all her labour. Here I am storm-tost on the waves of the open sea; and I regret the past as a man sighs to look backward at the shore. Moreover (a thing yet harder to bear) amid this vast swirl of tossing billows mine eyes can scarce reach unto the shore that I have left"<sup>3</sup>.

We may make some allowance here for the false glamour of distance, just as we discount the Virgilian *felices nimium*. But there is deep insight in Newman's parallel between the Virgilian and Benedictine ideals, so long as we do not apply it indis-

<sup>1</sup> For a similar instance of the devil's sensitiveness to happy ridicule, see *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> See appendix 3.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 77, col. 149, slightly abridged.

criminally to times and places where the sacred fire was smouldering or altogether spent<sup>1</sup>.

When, then, Virgil chooses the country and rejects the town, he shows us that a certain aspect of the country is congenial. Repose, intellectual and moral, is that quality of country life which he selects for his praises; and effort, and bustle, and excitement is that quality of a town life which he abhors. Herein, then, according to Virgil, lies the poetry of St Benedict, in the "*secura quies et nescia fallere vita*," in the absence of anxiety and fretfulness, of schemes and scheming, of hopes and fears, of doubts and disappointments. Such a life,—living for the day without solicitude for the morrow, without plans or objects, even holy ones, here below; working, not (so to say) by the piece, but as hired by the hour; sowing the ground with the certainty, according to the promise, of reaping; reading or writing this present week without the consequent necessity of reading or writing during the next; dwelling among one's own people without distant ties; taking each new day as a whole in itself, an addition, not a complement, to the past; and doing works which cannot be cut short, for they are complete in every portion of them,—such a life may be called emphatically Virgilian.

And again (p. 377):

"The monastic institute," says the biographer of St Maurus, "demands *summa quies*, the most perfect quietness," and where was quietness to be found, if not in reverting to the original condition of man, as far as the changed circumstances of our race admitted? in having no wants, of which the supply was not close at hand; in the "*nil admirari*"; in having neither hope nor fear of anything below; in daily prayer, daily bread, and daily work, one day being just like another, except that it was one step nearer than the day before it to that great Day, which would swallow up all days, the day of everlasting rest<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Sketches*, III (1873), 409.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Ailred of Rievaulx, with his conception of well-ordered monastic life as the soul's Sabbath Rest. (P.L. vol. 195, cols. 526, 534, 578-9.)

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE RULE OF BENEDICT

WHETHER the Rule in its present state be composite or homogeneous, is a minor question; for nobody seems to doubt that the whole is St Benedict's own work. Wölfflin gives good reasons for supposing that it once ended with chapter 66, and that the rest is an after-thought or a succession of after-thoughts. Abbot Butler (p. 168) disagrees with this; his argument is interesting as laying special stress upon that Benedictine precept of strict claustration which has been almost abandoned by modern monks. But both would agree that the Rule, as we now have it, represents what Benedict himself wished his brethren to live by.

The saint's style rises sometimes to passion or enthusiasm, but is always direct; it smacks strongly of the colloquial Latin of his time; he had been scared from his studies by the immorality of the city, and had left Rome, as Gregory puts it, "knowingly ignorant and wisely unlearned." We have here not a work of learning, but of the highest common-sense. The Rule owes its immense diffusion and influence both to the needs of the age and to its own inherent qualities. As to this first factor, we have seen already that there were many monks in the West, many of whom were a law unto themselves. We have seen how Cassian a century before, and Caesarius and Cassiodorus at about Benedict's own time, but independently, strove to remedy this lawlessness. The time, therefore, was ripe for a final lawgiver, and St Benedict was the man. He had, for such a work, not only talent but genius, knowing exactly what it wanted, and determined to attain this. The Rule is commanding, because the saint himself was eminently fitted for command. He speaks, from the very first sentence onwards, in a tone of authority beyond that of his predecessors; and he enforces a discipline worthy of his high aim, but balanced, moderate, and therefore eminently practical. This Rule is one of the last and most characteristic achievements of that Roman people who ruled so

successfully not only because they insisted so grimly on things necessary but also because they knew how to be tolerant of unessential differences, leaving so much self-government to their subject peoples. Much of the work is, naturally enough, based upon Pachomius and Basil, Caesarius and Augustine; the best indication of his sources is to be found in Abbot Butler's Freiburg edition of the Rule. But this shows his common-sense; he had spent years in choosing the best he could find for his purpose, whether in ancient customs, in later modifications, or in his own experience. He had the wide purview of a true statesman, and the true statesman's inflexible resolve to enforce in practice whatsoever his choice had embraced as an ideal. He is Roman, it must be said again, in his quiet determination to tolerate no disobedience on the points that really matter. Seebass<sup>1</sup> rightly emphasizes those words of the Prologue: "Constituenda ergo est a nobis dominici schola servitii"; the word *schola* is here used less of *instruction* than of *discipline*. In late imperial times, the word was frequently used of any corporation, and especially of the emperor's body-guard; then it was applied to provincial garrisons also, by a gradual change of meaning which is no greater, after all, than that which is traceable in *regiment*. These *scholae* had their own military code, strictly enforced by a *magister*; and Benedict has adopted both the idea and the word<sup>2</sup>. *Schola*, therefore, in the Rule, has the same connotation as *servitium*; the *dominici schola servitii* was a code of military law, where the Lord was Imperator. And the *magister* was Benedict himself; the first words of the Prologue run, "Hearken, O son, to the precepts of the Master." The Rule is *magistra*: "Omnes magistrum sequantur Regulam" (ch. 3). Those for whom he writes have already "joined up" and taken the oath for regular service; *servitium dominicum, servitus nostra* (ch. 49, 50). And the discipline is to be as strict as any army discipline; in the Prologue

<sup>1</sup> In Herzog's *Realencyclopädie*. Ed. Plitt and Hauck, art. *Benedikt*, p. 580. The only accessible English translation of the Rule (King's Classics), which is modernized from an older version of 1638, is misleading here as in one or two other places. The 1638 translator rightly wrote "of the Lord's service"; the modernizer has wrongly altered this *of to for*.

<sup>2</sup> Compare his use of *senpecta*, a vulgarized form of the Greek *συμπαίκτης*, a term gradually applied to aged gladiators who had been allowed to retire from the arena, and transferred by Benedict to aged monks whose infirmities craved indulgence.

we twice have *militaturus, arma*; again in ch. 2, *militare*; again ch. 58, *lex sub qua militare vis*. It is a curious anticipation of a very startling sentence from the leader of advanced political philosophy in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century:

Until labourers and employees perform the work of industry in the spirit in which soldiers perform that of an army, industry will never be moralized; and military life will remain what, in spite of the anti-social character of its direct object, it has hitherto been, the chief school of moral cooperation<sup>1</sup>.

With all Benedict's care that the abbot shall temper his discipline with mercy and consideration, there is no question of shrinking from the severest penalties when discipline is at stake. Excommunication is to be employed when the culprit comprehends such punishment, either in the milder form of separation from the common meals or under the most stringent conditions of absolute separation from society of the brethren, whether in refectory or cloister or choir, "knowing that terrible sentence of St Paul, that such an one is delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." If the culprit be not in a state to understand the significance of such a penalty, "let him be subjected to corporal punishment"; in other words, if neither rebuke nor excommunication amend him, "let the vengeance of stripes fall upon him." If even stripes prove ineffectual, "let the abbot now deal with him as a wise physician. . . let him take the knife and cut him off [from the community]. . . lest one scabbed sheep infect the flock." But, at every stage, persuasion, remonstrance and "secret consolation" must be brought into play, that severity may be avoided as much as possible<sup>2</sup>.

This quasi-military Christ-discipline involves a stricter separation from the world than had been insisted on by Basil or Cassian (ch. 58, 66). *Stabilitas loci* is one of the primary and most characteristic Benedictine precepts: once vowed to such-

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill, *Essay on Comte*, 1865, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 23-28. A writer in the *Church Quarterly* for Jan. 1912 (pp. 288-9) extols all this to the disadvantage of modern English law by introducing a strange confusion between the *offence* and the *penalty*. St Benedict makes no allowance for a brother who does not realize his offence; it is the abbot's business to proclaim the offence and to allot the punishment. But, in that allocation of punishment, the abbot will choose a moral penalty (excommunication) for such as can comprehend it, and corporal punishment for such as cannot.

and—such a cloister, the votary can never go forth (except by the abbot's command or permission) without apostasy. Moreover, the monastery itself is to be so fenced in, if possible, that no monk shall ever go outside the precincts except upon the most necessary business<sup>1</sup>. His daily work, his whole life's vocation, is to keep the Rule within those four walls. And, like the Roman republican army, like every army under the healthiest national conditions, this Order comprehends all sorts and conditions of men. Freemen and serfs may rub shoulders there: "for, whether serf or free, we are all one in Christ" (ch. 2). Nobles and poor men are considered alike (ch. 59). All are to start upon the same level; each is to be promoted, or to remain subordinate, according to his capacity as a monk, without reference to his birth or wealth or learning; even without reference to his sacerdotal dignity, if he happens to be a priest (ch. 2, 60, 62, cf. 61). In fact, we must grasp from the first that Benedict had no intention of founding a clerical order. As Abbot Ford says:

The saint's purpose was not to institute an order of clerics with clerical duties and offices, but an organization and a set of rules for the domestic life of such laymen as wished to live as fully as possible the type of life presented in the gospel. . . . Later, the Church imposed the clerical state upon Benedictines, and with the state came a preponderance of clerical and sacerdotal duties; but the impress of the lay origin of the Benedictines has remained, and is perhaps the source of some of the characteristics which mark them off from later Orders<sup>2</sup>.

The founder's ideal was simply that of sincere Christian life in community, as Christian life was conceived in that age.

This straightforward Christian common-life may be gathered under three heads: Labour, Prayer, and Self-denial.

Of Labour, Abbot Ford says very truly that it is prior, in St Benedict's conceptions, even to prayer; hard work is essential

<sup>1</sup> The significance of this chapter 66 in sixteenth century monastic history—a significance which is still farther emphasized by Abbot Butler's interpretation of it—is fully discussed in my third volume.

<sup>2</sup> *Catholic Encyclopedia*, II, 468. The articles in this Encyclopedia are startlingly unequal; e.g. the statements about monastic schools in the article "Education" are a tissue of grotesque errors, strung together from the most untrustworthy sources. Abbot Ford's article, on the contrary, is admirable in its clearness and moderation, and seldom falls into the historical exaggerations which have been so long current among his predecessors.

to soul-health<sup>1</sup>. As St Gregory writes concerning St Benedict himself, even the elect need "to be wearied with service and with labour" before they can attain to complete self-mastery (*l.c.* bk II, ch. 2; cf. ch. 48, 50, 57 of the Rule, and the first sentence of 46). And the labour of the Rule comprises mainly handiwork and domestic duties, especially field-labour and kitchen-work (ch. 43, 35). It is to be steady, hard, but seldom exhausting; harvest-work is contemplated as quite exceptional (ch. 48). But, as a Roman who knew what Roman civilization was, Benedict assumed also a certain amount of brain-work. He prescribes a minimum of about three hours' reading every day, and more on some days<sup>2</sup>. Those brethren who wish may also read during the hour of siesta after dinner, but "so as not to disturb the others"; one of the many medieval indications that men read aloud in those days, even when they were reading only to themselves. Equally instructive is the provision that a monk, normally, reads one volume per annum; this comes out even more clearly in Lanfranc's constitutions for the English monasteries<sup>3</sup>. But Benedict allows for the possibility of illiterate monks; and this at a time when much of the ancient Roman culture still survived, and when Latin, of a sort, was still the vernacular speech of Italy. In chapter 58 the monk is bidden "to write his request [for admission] with his own hand; or, at least, if he knoweth not letters, let another write at his request." In chapter 48 he writes of Sunday reading: "But if any brother be so negligent and slothful that he will not or cannot meditate or read, let

<sup>1</sup> *Cath. Encyc. l.c.* 468. "In the regeneration of human nature in the order of discipline, even prayer comes after work; for grace meets with no co-operation in the soul and heart of an idler."

<sup>2</sup> Ch. 48. Abbot Butler reckons "from three to four hours," inclining definitely to the longer calculation (pp. 286-7, 333); but it is difficult to assent completely to his reckoning on pp. 279-80; he seems there, as elsewhere, to assume an extreme punctuality of time-table which is anachronistic in the Middle Ages, even among monks, who at their best were certainly among the most punctual of men. But his chapter xvii is a very painstaking and valuable piece of work, enabling the reader to follow the Benedictine day more closely, and to form a clearer judgement for himself, than anything else of the kind which I have seen.

<sup>3</sup> Both Benedict's and Lanfranc's precepts are translated in my *Social Life in Britain*, pp. 100-1, but the former not quite completely: moreover, I now think that I was mistaken in taking the morning reading in winter as only one hour, and that Abbot Butler is certainly nearer the truth in calculating 2½ hours.



some work be given him to do, that he be not idle." It is difficult to follow Abbot Butler's interpretation of these two passages: "he does contemplate the case of one unable to write, but he expected all to read"<sup>1</sup>. St Benedict will not allow all to take their turn in reading aloud during the meal in refectory, but only "those who may edify such as hear them" (ch. 38 of a similar precaution in ch. 47). St Benedict had no idea of creating a learned Order: nor have the Benedictines in general ever been learned: the Congregation of St Maur is one of the brilliant exceptions to their general mediocrity. The average Benedictine no more competed with the professional student of the Middle Ages than he competed with the professional field-worker or artisan, in the early days when Benedictine labour was a reality. The one and the other were regulated with a direct view to his soul's health; and, even at exceptional times and places in the Middle Ages, the monk was seldom learned save in the sense in which we could apply the same term to Bunyan or Whitefield; at the most, he knew his Bible well, and the stock commentaries, and had meditated assiduously on what he read. With the legend that the average monk was a classical scholar, even in the vaguest sense, I deal later in my second volume. Meanwhile we may bear in mind what St Gregory, himself a monk, says of St Benedict: "He despised the literary studies [of Rome]...and departed, knowingly ignorant and wisely unlearned." The sentence gains point from St Gregory's own protest that he despises the niceties of style, and disdains to subject the Divine oracles to the rules of the grammarian<sup>2</sup>.

Under the second heading, Prayer, the Saint's demands were again moderate. We cannot find in the Rule those 5½ or 6 hours of daily prayer which, in theory at least, characterized the Benedictinism of the later Middle Ages. His prescriptions on this point are by far the longest in the book; yet they are rather hortatory than absolute. He expressly grants a great deal of freedom (ch. 18) but insists on two points which give a rough maximum and minimum. On the one hand, public prayer must

<sup>1</sup> p. 286. I have dealt in *The Hibbert Journal* for Jan. 1920 with the exaggerated ideas of Benedictine culture to which Abbot Butler lends his authority; I am discussing the subject more fully in my second volume.

<sup>2</sup> Prefatory Letter to his *Moralizations on Job* (P.L. vol. 75, col. 616).

be brief: "not in much speaking, but in purity of heart and compunction of tears" (ch. 20). On the other, the whole Psalter must be chanted (or said) from end to end during the week; "for we read that our holy Fathers were strenuous enough to fulfil in a single day this task which I pray that we lukewarm folk may complete in the whole week" (ch. 18). Each service, as a rule, consisted of three psalms with a little additional matter, and therefore took from twenty minutes to half an hour. They aimed at fulfilling those words of the 119th psalm: "In the midst of the night I will rise to give thanks unto Thee...seven times a day do I praise Thee." The very complicated question of the original hours is admirably worked out in Abbot Butler's 17th chapter, and probably brings us as near to the exact horarium as we can expect at this distance of time. In the later Middle Ages the time-table settled down roughly as follows: (1) Nocturns (or Matins), and Lauds, practically one continuous service, sometimes at midnight, but more often at about 2 a.m., after which the monk went to bed again till (2) Prime, at the first hour of day: *i.e.* 6 a.m. Then, at three-hourly intervals, followed (3) Tierce (4) Sext and (5) None. Either the monks or the world-clergy, or both, gradually anticipated these hours; so that None, from 3 p.m., became midday, which has thus gained its name of *noon*. The 6th service, Vespers, was sung shortly after sundown; and the 7th, Compline, came after a short public reading from Cassian's *Collations*. The later habit of taking a light and informal meal at this time has given rise to the modern use of *collation* in that sense. A good deal of private prayer is implied also by chapters 7 and 20 of the Rule, and perhaps by chapter 4 of St Gregory's *Life*, though this is not quite conclusive. Of Masses, the saint contemplates only about two a week, *i.e.* on Sundays and on the greater feasts; a paucity which seems incredible to some later commentators, but is frankly admitted by the best authorities. All great religious reforms have had a strong tinge of unsacerdotalism. We have already seen how it is probable that St Antony never communicated at all for many years, and how St Benedict once discovered Easter Day only by a miracle, and how early Benedictine records show there are surprisingly few priests among the monks.

Under the third head, of Self-Denial, come the *tria sub-*

*stantialia* of the Benedictine vow, from the last two of which, as the best medieval authorities assure us, not even a pope could dispense the monk. These three essential points are Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity<sup>1</sup>.

Poverty was to be absolute in the personal, though not in the corporate sense. Not even the monk's stylus and writing-tablets can be claimed as his personal property; the itching for personal possessions is one of the worst foes to monastic discipline (ch. 33). If a noble's son comes to the monastery, whatever is offered with him must go into the common funds (ch. 59). The abbot must frequently search in every corner, even in the monks' mattresses, for hidden hoards, small or great (ch. 55). Other prescriptions may be found in ch. 54, 58; and Gregory tells us how he himself ordered a hoarding monk to be buried in the middle of the convent dunghill, and how nothing but his repentance at the last gasp had saved the man from hell (*Dial.* iv, 57). This proceeding became a stock precedent in canon law (*Decret. Greg.* lib. iii, tit. xxxv, c. 6). St Bernard, the man who did most to revive the Benedictine spirit in later ages, was thus able to claim for himself and his brethren *nudi nudum Christum sequimur*.

Obedience, again, must be complete; it is partly on this account that the rules of poverty and celibacy are enforced. The monk must be dependent on his abbot not only spiritually, but even for the barest necessities of life (ch. 53). Obedience is mainly treated of in ch. 5 and 71. It is put on the highest ground: the abbot stands here in the place of Christ, a conception which lays very heavy responsibilities on himself and his subjects. Though chapter 68 expressly guards the brethren against blind obedience to impossible commands, yet even here the stress is laid rather on obedience than on reason.

Chastity is not so much enforced in the Rule, as taken for granted. From the very first, celibacy had been of the essence of monachism; and Benedict had no need to emphasize what had been a commonplace for more than two centuries.

<sup>1</sup> See Aquinas, 2 a, 2 ae, q. 88, art. 11, *conclusio*, quoting from Innocent III (*Decret. Greg.* lib. iii, tit. xxv, c. 6): "the abdication of private property, like the custody of chastity, is so firmly annexed to the monastic Rule that not even a Pope can grant licence to the contrary." Wadding gives a formidable list of corroborative authorities under the year 1297, § 46 (v, 389).

These *tria substantialia* are supported by many minor prescriptions all following the sense of those Pauline words: "I buffet my body and bring it into subjection."

Food and drink are to be reduced to a healthy minimum (ch. 39-40). Butchers' meat (*quadripedum carnes*) is expressly forbidden to all but the sick. Wine is allowed in moderation; for teetotalism was almost unknown in Italy then as now; the daily allowance was a *hemina*. It speaks volumes for the gradual but rapid modifications of the Rule that this measure, though clearly indicated by the founder, was very early blurred in hopeless confusion. A whole volume has been written on it: the learned Martène fills nearly two quarto pages with a summary of the results. He concludes with great probability that it was nearly equivalent to a modern pint; and some of his quotations from ancient commentators show that there were some heads, at least, for whom even a *hemina* of wine was too much.

Silence was to be complete for most of the day; and at no time were jests or laughter welcome (ch. 6). "Buffoonery<sup>1</sup> or idle words, and such as move to laughter, we condemn in all places by an eternal prohibition; we do not permit our disciple to open his mouth to such speech as that."

Baths were a rare concession, except to the sick (ch. 37). This refers, of course, to hot baths; the cold bath was not a medieval institution in any rank of society<sup>2</sup>.

Travel abroad, as we have seen, was almost entirely forbidden.

Lastly, corporal punishment was a regular institution, so ordinary that it is sometimes spoken of merely as *regularis*

<sup>1</sup> *Scurrilitates*. That such "buffooneries" are not conceived as essentially sinful, but only as unsuited to monks, is shown by ch. 49, where *loquacitas* and *scurrilitas* are named with food and drink and sleep among the things to be restricted especially during Lent.

<sup>2</sup> It was doubtless from monastic and similar indications that Michelet was emboldened to declare, with picturesque exaggeration, that Europe forgot to bathe for 1000 years. Among great folk, the hot bath was always kept up as a luxury; even the citizens and villagers, at specially prosperous times, set up their public baths (*étuves, Stuben*). Luce, however, seems to exaggerate somewhat in the other direction when he asserts that, in the prosperous days of medieval Normandy, "toute habitation un peu aisée est pourvue de sa 'cuve à baigner,' et l'on n'est pas médiocrement surpris de trouver de petits établissements de bains dans de simples hameaux" (*B. du Guesclin*, 1882, p. 56). He gives no statistics, and it is possible that he generalizes from too few instances. But the hot bath was certainly a medieval luxury, and therefore forbidden to the ascetic. See appendix 27.

*disciplina* (ch. 3, 23, 28; cf. 45). How far all this was softened for the oblates or older boys, will be seen in the chapter here following.

All through, however, we must bear in mind the dispensing power which Benedict grants to the abbot. However illegitimately this was pleaded by contemporaries in the Middle Ages, and is still more emphatically invoked by modern apologists, in favour of serious relaxations of regular discipline, it was nevertheless very real up to a certain point, and forms one of the many testimonials to Benedict's moderation and sense of actuality (ch. 40, 51). Seebass rightly emphasizes the contrast between what is said of punishments in chapters 24 and 27, and in the reforming statutes of the Council of Aachen in 817. Benedict is concerned that the abbot should never punish with undue severity:

let him imitate the example of that Good Shepherd who left his ninety and nine in the mountains and went forth to seek the one wandering sheep, with whose weakness He felt such compassion, as to deign to lay it upon His sacred shoulders.

The reformers of Aachen found it necessary to command that there should be some sort of provision for the warming of monastic prisons in winter (§ 40). The strictest scrutiny of St Benedict's rule of life, taken in connection with the life of his day and country, leaves us more and more penetrated with the truth of Gregory's characterization (bk II, ch. 36):

He wrote a Rule for his monks, both excellent for discretion, and also eloquent for style. Of whose life and conversation, if any be curious to know further, he may in the institution of that Rule understand all his manner of life and discipline: for the holy man could not otherwise teach than himself lived.

We may indeed say that Benedict's life was in this Rule, not only in Gregory's prospective sense, but also retrospectively. He put into it all the best of what he himself had lived and become. Apart from his study of earlier Rules, we have no reason to trace these precepts to any source but his own long and varied individual experience. We do not know that he took counsel with any great man in church or state. There is no indication that he looked forward to any great future for his Rule; we know

of only one daughter-foundation in his life-time, at Terracina; and it is probable that, outside Italy, the first Benedictine houses were those which the missionary Augustine founded in England. Yet the Rule was so exactly suited to the higher needs of this one community for which it was written, that the world found it suitable for all; and its success was inevitable. This was the moment when the Roman see was gradually winning its way to independent sovereignty, as against the Lombards in Italy and the Emperor at Constantinople. Just at this moment, then, Benedict's work made it possible to bind together the scattered forces of western monachism into a single whole, admirably disciplined, yet with the utmost freedom of movement compatible with a discipline so rigorous. Very soon, the monks became the most organized of all the ecclesiastical forces upon which the pope could count; and they formed also, of all ecclesiastical bodies, that one whose general interests and ideals coincided most exactly with those of the papacy. They were truly a papal militia, *schola servitii*, with a *lex sub qua militant*. What the military colonies were to the Roman empire, the monasteries will now be to what we may call the papal empire. This is admirably exemplified in Northern Italy. Under the early Lombard kings, it seemed that a national Lombard church would be formed, independent of Rome, with its centre at Milan or Aquileia. But the scale was turned in this struggle by the steady adhesion of the monasteries to Rome; even of those monasteries which had originally been least wedded to pro-Roman traditions. All through the later Middle Ages, whatever territory was conquered politically from pagans was at once secured, ecclesiastically and politically, by the foundation of a chain of blockhouses in the form of monasteries. When Henry VIII wanted to break the Pope's power, he had first to break the monasteries.

Benedict, then, had seized upon a movement which was big with future possibilities; and, without self-seeking, without more self-assertion than was necessary to give effect to his greater qualities, he impressed upon that movement, which he probably never clearly foresaw, a grandeur and a solidity which almost justify Viollet-le-Duc's dictum that the formation of this Rule is "perhaps the most important historical fact in the whole

Middle Ages”<sup>1</sup>. We see his own personal ideal in his description of the abbot’s work and character (ch. 2, 64):

The abbot, who has been found worthy to stand at the head of a monastery, should ever bear in mind those Bible words, and, as he is greater in name, show himself greater also in deed. For we believe that he stands in Christ’s place in the monastery, when he is called by that name whereof the Apostle saith: *Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, father!*... Above all things, let him not forget or neglect the health of those souls committed to his care... but let him always consider that he is set to rule souls, for whom he himself must one day give account.

Benedict’s own idealism was based upon a clear conception of the actual facts of life. He knew that he was describing not only aspirations, but possibilities, since he and his closest disciples had lived the very life which he now set down in writing. Therefore, like all true ideals, the Rule has appealed not to visionaries alone, but also to the most practical of men. There seems no reason to question the assertion of a commentator in Migne’s edition (col. 216):

Cosmo de’ Medici, when asked why he so assiduously studied St Benedict’s Rule, made answer: “Because the holy Father’s ordinances are so prudent, that they supply me with admirable hints for the government of the people committed to my care.” And in fact he instituted an Order of Knighthood whose rule was modelled on the Benedictine.

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionnaire de l’Architecture*, 1, 242.

## CHAPTER XIV

### OBLATE CHILDREN

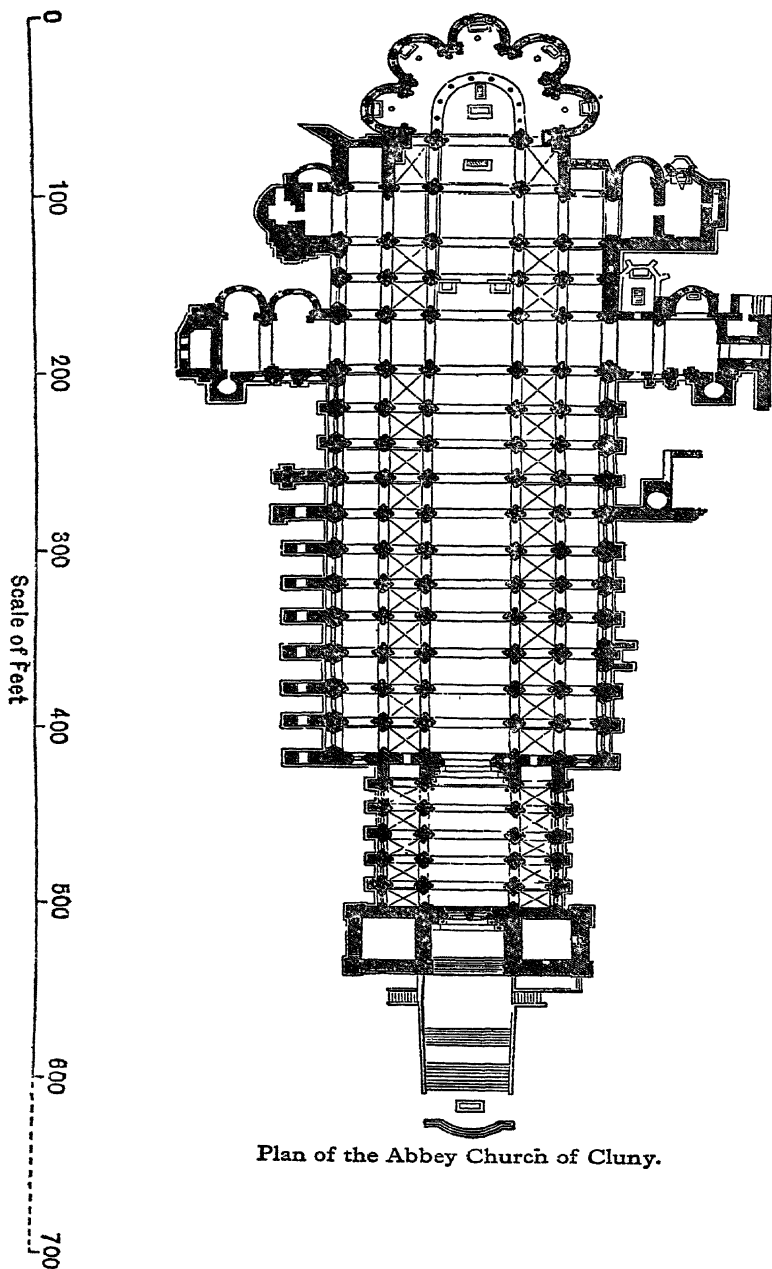
THIS Rule, then, rapidly absorbed all the others in the West; so that monasticism and Benedictinism were soon practically coextensive, until the rise of the Austin Canons, who followed a Rule based upon various writings of St Augustine. This newer development began systematically about 750 A.D. with St Chrodegang, bishop of Metz, and was completed in the eleventh century by the formal recognition of the Augustinian Canons as a monastic order side by side with the Benedictines. Meanwhile Benedictinism had entered upon a new and inevitable stage of development.

The founder, as we have seen, made no provision for the interdependence of his monasteries, probably because he never looked forward to any such necessity. It is difficult to follow the arguments of certain distinguished modern Benedictines who look upon monastic individualism as an essential and conscious factor in Benedict's ideal<sup>1</sup>. Dom Berlière seems far nearer the truth when he argues that Innocent III's provisions for interdependence met a legitimate demand, and that the logical and ideal development would be to extend this principle, and make the Benedictine centralization as complete as that of most other Orders<sup>2</sup>. Be that as it may, the need for such centralization was very early felt by very distinguished monks. In 817, Benedict of Aniane instituted a series of sweeping reforms with the support of the Emperor Louis the Pious; these included an attempt to link the scattered monasteries together into one congregation. That attempt proved premature; but it was successfully carried out, for a great part of the Order, a century and a half later. The great monastery of Cluny was founded about

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Abbot Butler, *l.c.* chaps. xv and xvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue Bénédictine*, VIII (1891), 259, 262; IX, 547, 556. In XVIII, 368, he quotes from Abbot Herbord of Bamberg, who, in 1159, attributed the decay of the Benedictines to their want of a general visitation-system, organized for the uniform control of the whole Order. In my next volume, I shall have occasion to quote still more emphatic expressions of the same views from great churchmen of later centuries.





910 A.D., and was fortunate in a long series of remarkable abbots. Between 924 and 1109—from St Odo, the founder of its real greatness, through St Maieul, who is said to have refused the tiara, down to St Hugh, who saw two of his monks ascend the Papal throne, this monastery was governed by five abbots who took place among the greatest churchmen of their time, and four of whom have been formally canonized by the Church. By the constitution of Cluny, the whole government of this congregation was centralized in the abbot of the mother-house; representatives of all the houses attended the General Chapter, but their powers were only advisory; the system was definitely monarchical. And, under abbots of such unusual character and ability, it was fully justified by its results. It spread rapidly through Europe, partly by the foundation of new houses, partly by the more or less willing submission of older foundations to this new authority<sup>1</sup>. We get very interesting sidelights on this process from the chronicler of St-Gall, who describes with naïve indignation the encroachments of these new Pharisees, presuming to impose abstinence from flesh, and similar returns to the actual prescriptions of the Rule, upon abbeys older and more honourable than their own<sup>2</sup>. But, whether willingly or unwillingly, the older foundations were frequently brought to heel; and, by the middle of the eleventh century, the abbot of Cluny enjoyed an influence in Europe second only to the Pope's. His conventual church was the greatest in Christendom; and the domestic buildings were so extensive that, on the occasion of the Council of Lyons in 1245, the Pope and the king of France lodged there simultaneously, each with a royal suite, yet without preventing the monks from continuing their daily avocations.

Before coming to St Bernard, therefore, let us take stock of monachism in some of its more dignified forms during the last years of what may be called the Cluniac Age. But it will be well to begin with a brief sketch of the monk's day in these greater and better-ordered monasteries, Benedictine or Cluniac, from which we can get real glimpses of domestic life.

<sup>1</sup> At St Hugh's death, Cluny possessed 200 dependent monasteries, most of which were grouped under her greatest daughter-houses; *e.g.* Aurillac had 65 dependent priories, Charité-s.-Loire 52, Lewes 10, etc. (Heimbucher, 1, 245).

<sup>2</sup> Ekkehard, ch. xvi (pp. 57 ff.).

The best monasticism of this age is most sympathetically described in chapter iii of R. W. Church's *St Anselm*. The writer makes some use of Orderic, but much more of Lanfranc's *Constitutions*, which picture the ideal monk's life, often in its minutest details. Lanfranc's monastery of Bec stood on an even higher plane of discipline than Orderic's St-Évroul; and, for such communities as these, at their healthiest period, Church's description is seldom overdrawn. These Norman monks, on the whole, did achieve an admirable harmony of soul and body; seldom has community-life worn a more venerable and beneficent aspect. We shall see, in the next chapter, how far the same virtues may be claimed for monasticism as revealed by such witnesses as Ralph Glaber, Ordericus Vitalis, and Guibert of Nogent.

Orderic knew his ground well; for he had been a monk from early childhood. His father, who was a priest, had probably dedicated the child by way of expiation: "In my eleventh year, mine own father gave me up for God's sake; and I, a fledgeling exile, was sent from England to Normandy, that I might be enrolled in the army of the Eternal King" (375 a). Guibert had been vowed to clerical celibacy before his birth (842 a, 843 c); Glaber donned the cowl at the age of 12 or earlier (686 d). This dedication of children was so common then, and is so strange to us, that it will not be out of place to deal with it at some length, here on the threshold of the monk's daily life.

The 59th chapter of the Rule runs thus:

If perchance any great man offers his son to God in our monastery, if the boy be not of age, let his parents write the aforesaid petition [which a grown-up person makes for himself]. Then let them wrap this petition with the child's hand, and the [sacrificial] oblation [of bread and wine], in the altar cloth; and let them thus offer him. With regard to their worldly goods, let them either, in this petition, swear that they will never give him anything, whether through a third person or in any other way, and that they will give him no means of getting such goods; or else, if they will not do thus, and if they will offer any alms to the monastery as a reward for their son's admission, let them make [formal] donation of such goods as they wish to give, reserving the usufruct thereof to themselves, if they will. And thus let all channels be stopped whereby the child might conceive any suspicion which might tempt him to ruin—which God forbid! but which we

know by experience. Let poorer folk do after a like fashion. Those who possess nothing whatsoever shall simply make their petition, and offer their son with the [sacrificial] oblation in the presence of witnesses.

St Benedict here followed an already prevalent custom; children were thus offered at almost any age; Avitus of Vienne, in about 490, speaks of children in their cradles devoted to the monastic life; St Benedict himself is known to have accepted a senator's son and another boy at the age of 7; his favourite disciple St Maur joined him at the age of 12; but 7 seems to have been the commonest age in early Benedictine cloisters<sup>1</sup>. St Caesarius of Arles refused to take children at an earlier age than 6; his successor St Aurelian put the limit at 10<sup>2</sup>. It is common, in monastic chartularies, to meet with such deeds of donation as I here translate from the records of the great abbey of Molesme, the parent or step-parent of the Cistercian Order (II, 85, between 1076 and 1111 A.D.)

Seeing that the World (as saith St John the Evangelist) is seated in wickedness, and, at the instigation of the devil who hateth all good things, very many men who live in the World, inflamed by covetousness, which is the root of all evil, forget the good which they or which others do for the good of their souls, therefore we have been careful to record in writing for the knowledge of all faithful men, both now and hereafter, that which Elizabeth sister to Hugues de Bourmont [a monk of Molesme] hath done for the abbey of Molesme. For this lady aforesaid, coming with her only son Eudes, as yet a child, and quitting the World wholly at this aforesaid abbey, hath offered this child aforesaid unto God, there to remain continually with the rest of the brethren, in the garb of a monk, for the service of God and of His holy mother Mary; and that the lady herself might throw off all worldly cares and live in Religion with other ladies in the same place. When therefore, in the devoutness of her mind, she had accomplished this, in order that neither she nor her son might cling to any further hope of worldly possession, from her manor of Sandaucour and all her other possessions, whether of bondmen or bondwomen, woods or pastures or other revenues soever pertaining unto the said manor,

<sup>1</sup> Caesarius of Heisterbach mentions a nunnery of about 1200 A.D. where "by ancient custom, no girl is received after the age of 7 years" (*Dial. Mirac.* I, 389).

<sup>2</sup> N. Seidl, *De Pueris Oblatis* (Munich, 1872), pp. 14-24. This is an exhaustive and most interesting monograph of 188 pages: it may be consulted *passim* for the assertions in my text.

she hath given unto God and the blessed Mary, ever-virgin, and to the monks who serve them continually at this abbey of Molesme, all that which she had not already given to the church of St Michael at Molesme. In witness whereof etc. etc.

The greatest care was taken, at this solemn dedication-ceremony of a child to the monastery, to cut him off thenceforward irrevocably from the world<sup>1</sup>. It was held for several centuries that a child, thus vowed by his parents, had no further choice of his own; that was the tragedy of Gottschalk's life. The first great general council of Spain, under Isidore of Seville, explicitly decreed that the paternal vow had binding force; "we forbid in these cases all return to the world." Gregory the Great held it "iniquitous" that a child thus vowed should go forth into the world and marry. Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, Jephtha's vow and Samuel's dedication afforded convincing Biblical proof that parents might dispose of their children for life or death. Charles the Great tried to give the oblates some reasonable freedom of choice; but more than three centuries passed before the popes finally took the same course. Three papal decrees, from 1179 onwards, decided that the oblate might decide finally for himself at the age of 14. Yet, though these were incorporated in Canon Law, the older decrees in the contrary sense stood also in that same body of Law; and it was possible for Martène to argue that the paternal dedication bound all boys for life until the days of the Council of Trent<sup>2</sup>. And, even under the most liberal interpretation of these twelfth century decrees, the oblate's silence was held to give consent; so that nothing but a definite protest on the part of this fourteen-year-old child could work his freedom; in the opinion of strict disciplinarians, there was little to choose between such a protest and sheer apostasy.

This oblate system was in full vigour before the great reforms began: Orderic and Guibert, Ekkehard and the *Annales*, show it as a regular element in the monastic world. Elaborate precautions were decreed to keep the boys apart from the monks; and the ideal of discipline is minutely set forth in the constitutions of Cluny<sup>3</sup>. The boys were not to exceed six in number; normally,

<sup>1</sup> See the formula in Martène, *Rit.* II, 1763, 163 b.

<sup>2</sup> Seidl, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Martène, *Mon. Rit.* lib. v, c. 5, pp. 230 ff., where abundant illustrative matter will also be found.



THE ABBEY AND TOWN OF VÉZELAY



there was a master for each boy. Their master waked them to follow the nightly services with the rest; if the abbot were still sleeping at this hour, then the boys must wake and wash in all possible silence; the master, therefore, rouses them not by word of mouth but "with a slight touch of the rod." Once in choir,

at these night services—nay, at all the other services also—if the boys offend in psalmody or chant, or fall asleep, or in any other such transgression, forthwith and without delay they are stripped of frock and cowl and judged, and beaten in their bare shirt, either by the prior or by their own master, with smooth and supple osier rods kept for this single purpose. . . . At all the services, their faces are turned eastwards, that they may be seen by the priors, who are wont to stand in that part of the choir. . . . When they sit in cloister or chapter-house, let each have a block of wood for a seat, and so far apart that not even the skirts of their garments can touch each other. . . . The boys are scourged customarily, when there is need, during talking-hour in cloister, never after vespers. The youths may accuse the boys only for offences against themselves (as for instance, for laughing or making signs at them, or other like misdeeds) but never for other things, except that such things should be told to their master, who will then accuse his boys in Chapter. . . . Oftentimes they receive their great condemnation in the great Chapter; then. . . . their master must not cease to smite until the president of the Chapter bid him desist. It is our custom that, whithersoever the boys go together, to Chapter or dormitory, to minster or anywhere else, the masters must follow. When they sit in school, no master must go forth without leave from the headmaster, except for bodily necessities, or if his name be written on the board for some service in church or refectory. No man maketh any sign to them; not even the headmaster, except on rare and most necessary occasions. The masters sleep between each pair of boys in the dormitory, and sit between them in the reredorter; and, if it be night, all the candles of their lanterns are fixed on the spikes which stand at the top of the lantern, that the boys may be clearly seen in all that they do; if the masters rise up before the boys, they stand face to face with them. When the boys are in bed, the master with his rod stands ever before them, and, if it be night, with his candle; the candle in one hand and the rod in the other. If one perchance delay beyond his fellow, he is at once touched smartly with the rod; for children should ever have chastisement with custody, and custody with chastisement. And be it known that this is their only chastisement, to be beaten with rods or to be pulled smartly by the hair; for they are never chastised with kicks or fists or the palm of the hand, nor in any other way than we have prescribed.



The rod, in fact, is ubiquitous in these constitutions. In the long winter nights, the master goes from bed to bed, and applies it lightly to any boy who has thrown his covering off<sup>1</sup>. At certain other times,

the headmaster standeth before them with his rod. . . Likewise when they arise, if they are slow in rising, the rod is ever over their head. After matins. . . they take off their shoes while the master holdeth the rod in his right hand and the candle in his left. . . If one of them, weighed down with sleep at the night services, sing not well, the master giveth into his hands a book of some weight, until he be awakened.

At the washing-trough, a master stands between the boys; even at hand-drying "they must be kept apart as far as possible; that is, one at each corner of the towel." It was their duty to begin the chant of grace at meals "unless they be hoarse, when the precentor shall begin," and most of the hymns in choir. Their master shaves their crown periodically, apart from the rest of the convent. If they lack anything in refectory, they may make no sign except to their master. No boy may even speak to another, "unless he get the master's leave, and speak in the hearing of all who are in the school." "They, like the rest, wash their own drawers or other garments that need washing, and lay them to dry on the grass of the cloister-garth." As to meals, some allowance is made: "if any be so young and tender that he needs it, let bread and wine be brought to him at daybreak as he sits in the cloister." Again, "when there is an extra drink of spiced wine, or any other beverage in refectory, then the master refectorar, if he be of mature age and morals, may let the boys hold their cups and pour drink therein." But this consideration for their weakness implies no relaxation of discipline; "in the refectory, let them be set apart at different tables, and each in face of one of the brethren who will not wink at their negligences." The boy is never to go forth from this school until the time come for his final vow. The school holds its own "chapter" for scrutiny of faults:

one boy accuseth another, if he knoweth aught against him; or, if he be found to have purposely concealed anything, he is beaten as well as the offender. And their master is to guard them with the most

<sup>1</sup> The boys, like the monks, ordinarily slept in their day-clothes, with one or more blankets for a covering.

jealous care. If the boys need to fetch a book, or the table of services, from any other place than where they are accustomed to sit, they never fetch it without the master's leave. Their seats in cloister are so ordained, that the boys sit against the wall and their masters in the screens<sup>1</sup> so that they can keep them ever in view: wherefore the masters write not in school. Let no monk dare to pass on his way among these boys, wheresoever they be and howsoever the space be narrow or the press of brethren great; under all circumstances no man may even pass so near unto the boys as that his garment touch one of them. And in winter, between matins and lauds, or again when the librarian singeth to the boys or heareth their lessons, the master must keep him carefully in his eye lest at any time or in any fashion he make any sign unto them. And (that I may at last make an end of this matter) it seemeth that it would be difficult for any king's son to be nurtured more diligently in his palace, than any boy is nurtured in a well-disciplined monastery.

If meticulous care were the main requisite for success, no doubt this monkish disciplinarian would be right; but most readers will probably judge that there is much here which can only defeat its own ends. In all my necessary abridgement, I have left out no cheerful or encouraging touches; rather the contrary. No doubt these rules were seldom kept in all their strictness; and we can no more assume that the boys always felt the hourly weight of these dismal well-meant restrictions, than we can assume that abbot and prior, almoner and precentor, did in fact possess all the virtues which the custumals require them to possess. But both cases mark equally clearly the ideal which was aimed at; an ideal in this school-case which differs widely from that of modern times; and our too scanty notices of actual life in the oblate-school do not go very far to brighten this sombre picture. In the exceptional cases where the monks kept *scholae exteriores* for the sons of nobles and well-to-do folk whose children might take orders and rise high in the Church, there was naturally more liberty for the play of human nature. There is in the Ramsey chronicle a charming story of about 980 A.D. Four noble youths, brought up from their childhood by St Oswald in that abbey,

lest, wearied by the rigour of the Order, they should fail for want of

<sup>1</sup> *In cancellis claustris*; by this date, the cloister was sometimes subdivided by stone or wooden partitions which screened separate inmates from the draughts.

some interval of recreation, were wont a few times in the week, at proper times and by licence of their masters, to relieve the labours and tedium of regular observance with honest play and boyish runnings hither and thither.

One day, with their servant, they found their way to the bell-tower, pulled the ropes, and let loose a bell which rang so violently that it cracked, to the intense indignation of their master and the rest of the monks.

Whereat the boys, terrified beyond measure and bursting into tears, remembered at last that sentence which they had often heard read in Chapter, wherein St Benedict biddeth all who may lose or break anything to hasten in accusation of himself; wherefore they came forthwith and cast themselves at the abbot's feet, recounting with tears and sobs the harm that they had done.

St Oswald called the brethren together, softened their indignation by reminding them that four boys of such noble birth would probably, in manhood, repay a hundredfold the pecuniary damage they had done, and thus begged them off from the promised whipping.

Then, dismissing the brethren, he exhorted and instructed the boys in private. They, obeying this kind father's admonitions, crept barefooted into the church and poured forth the blood of their heart's anxiety as an offering to the Lord, in the presence of those saints under whose patronage the abbey stood, that these might bear their vows to the ears of Divine Pity. Nor did heaven disdain the pure prayers of these boys; God showed evidently what they had asked and by what vows they had bound themselves, for in process of time He raised them to great and exalted honours in the world; amid which honours, remembering their vows, each of the four bestowed vast and renowned benefits upon this monastery, as the reader will see in the following pages<sup>1</sup>.

This evidence may be compared with other testimonies to the keen interest which some boys must have taken in the monasteries; not seldom, even in the case of a noble's son, the cloister became the most arresting "fragment from his dream of human life." Giraldus tells of himself how "when his elder brothers in their boyish games were wont, in the sand or dust, to build castles and cities and palaces as a prelude to their later life, this Gerald, as a like prelude, ever bent his whole mind to the building

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Abbat. Rames.* R.S. p. 112.

of monasteries and churches in play." St Waltheof, about the same time, at the court of King David of Scotland, while his elder brother built castles of branches, with a hobby-horse for charger and a stick for lance, "was wont to build the likeness of churches with sticks or stones, and to stand with outstretched hands as a priest at the celebration of Mass; and, ignorant of the words, he would chant a semblance of church-song"<sup>1</sup>.

But, if Gerald or Waltheof had come under the monks for a few years only, like those four Saxon nobles, they would have enjoyed wider privileges than the ordinary oblate, who was sealed to the abbey for his whole life long, and from whom monastic gravity was expected at an age at which limbs and brain alike need frequent freedom, and even occasional wilder licence, for their full development.

Very significant is that famous dialogue of St Anselm with his fellow-abbot, who complained that "we cease not to chastise our boys by day and by night, yet they grow daily worse and worse." Anselm pointed out that, whereas these boys were born "human, sharing in the same nature as yourselves," the unsparing application of such a system was a cruel waste of money and time; "ye expend your substance in nurturing human beings till they become brute beasts"<sup>2</sup>. Ekkehard shows us the boys at St-Gall living habitually under a régime which to us would seem harsh and oppressive, and breaking out, on certain privileged occasions, into liberties like those of the Roman slaves at the Saturnalia; liberties which developed later into the officially-recognized licence of the Boy Bishop<sup>3</sup>.

Even the Middle Ages felt their failure here: the oblate-system was practically dead in England long before the Reformation. The reformed Orders, in many cases, explicitly abolished it, giving as their reason its unfavourable action on the general discipline of the monastery. The Carthusian statutes run: "We receive no boys or youths, for we grieve to say that many evils have befallen monasteries by reason of them, and we fear great

<sup>1</sup> Girald. Camb. R.S. i, 45; Powicke, p. 53; AA.SS. Boll. Aug. i, p. 252, § 11.

<sup>2</sup> Eadmer, *Vita Anselmi*, lib. i, c. iv. Translated in *Med. Garner*, p. 37.

<sup>3</sup> For which see indices to E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, A. F. Leach, *The Schools of Medieval England*, and D. Rock, *The Church of our Fathers*.

dangers, both spiritual and bodily." Guibert of Nogent, about the same time, alleges this admission of boy-monks as one of the main causes of monastic decay<sup>1</sup>. In spite of the Cistercian prohibition, it is evident that even these reformed houses sometimes took oblates; the economic temptation was often irresistible<sup>2</sup>. But painful experience taught good Cistercians that their fathers had been wiser. Caesarius of Heisterbach, speaking of the first half of the thirteenth century, writes

the lord John, Archbishop of Trèves, a prudent man who knew the secrets of our Order very well, was wont to say that those who come to the Order in boyhood or youth, when the burden of sin weigheth not upon their conscience, are rarely fervid. Nay, wretched to relate! they either live lukewarmly and indifferently in the Order, or leave it altogether; for they lack the fear of an accusing conscience; they presume on their virtues, and thus are ill-fitted to resist temptation. Thou knowest this brother of ours who, not a month past, was deceived by a woman and departed from one of our granges? . . . I knew for certain that he was a virgin of his body and a well-disciplined youth; there was none whom I set higher among our lay brethren<sup>3</sup>.

Many saints had been oblates; and among the many sympathetic portraits of good monks in Orderic's pages we find a considerable proportion who had taken the habit very early. But the evidence enables us to apply to this system, *a fortiori*, St Augustine's verdict on monachism in general: "I have scarce known any better men than those who have profited in monasteries; but I have never known worse than those who have fallen in monasteries"<sup>4</sup>. And the contemporary judgements collected by Seidl (though he had not met with these very significant sentences of Caesarius) suggest very strongly that bad oblates were more numerous than the good.

When once the vows were taken, all were under the same rule of daily life, except so far as an official's duties excused him, or

<sup>1</sup> Col. 850 b, c. Other similar verdicts may be found in Seidl; I deal briefly with the subject in the 10th of my *Medieval Studies (Monastic Schools)*, pp. 10, 31.

<sup>2</sup> See Seidl, p. 90, quotation from a rescript of Clement IV in 1267: "It hath come to our hearing that ye sometimes draw boys and girls before the age of puberty to take the monastic habit, in consideration of the worldly goods which they would have had if they had remained in the world." Numerous examples leave no doubt that the oblate-system, as a whole, brought considerable wealth to the monasteries.

<sup>3</sup> *Dial. Mirac.* I, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. 78.

his status brought him privilege<sup>1</sup>. The night-services formed, in themselves, a strict and trying discipline. Matins and lauds were sung as practically one continuous service of about an hour and a half, beginning about midnight or in the small hours of the morning; after this (by the date with which we are now concerned) the monks went back to bed. As they slept in nearly all their day-clothes, and washing was a summary operation, these alternations of bed and choir created no difficulty. They rose again for prime, at about 6 a.m.<sup>2</sup>; after this came the conventual Mass, or even two Masses, with a sort of hasty breakfast between<sup>3</sup>. Then came chapter, so called from the section of the Rule which was read daily. This reading was preceded, at this time, by a brief reading from the Martyrology. Then came the disciplinary business of the house. Any brother conscious of an infraction since yesterday's chapter was bound now to confess it; in default of the culprit's voluntary confession, all who knew of it were bound to inform against him<sup>4</sup>. Such infractions were most commonly punished by the infliction of a fast, or of corporal punishment on the spot. For about half an hour after chapter, talking was permitted: for almost all the rest of the day (including meal-times) the brethren were bound to silence. "It is clear that St Benedict, like other monastic legislators, attached great importance to silence; and the public silence of

<sup>1</sup> It is well to refer here again to the exhaustive and most valuable account of the Benedictine day, in the earliest times, by Abbot Butler in chapter xvii of his *Ben. Monachism*.

<sup>2</sup> Since these hours depended greatly upon the sun, only an average can be given. *Prime* was of course the first hour of the day, i.e. 6 a.m. at the equinoxes; *none* was the ninth, or 3 p.m., but, as the modern *noon* shows, it gradually shifted forwards.

<sup>3</sup> St Benedict had contemplated Mass only for Sundays and festivals: but by this time the services were much more complicated.

<sup>4</sup> Abbot Butler (p. 207) implies that this rule of tale-bearing was exceptional, adding that it is "a very doubtful and dangerous proceeding, and certainly it is repellent to the idea of family life." For this he quotes a modern author; but it is astounding that he should not realize the prevalence of the custom in the Middle Ages, especially as Martène brings this out so fully in his *Commentary* (see index) and his *De Ritibus*, III (1764), 271 b, 298 a, 309 b, 325 b. See also the *Customary of St Augustine and Westminster*, I, 31; *Consuetudines Sublacenses* (ed. L. Allodi), p. 21; Arnulf of Boyers in P.L. vol. 185, col. 1192 a and *Studien und Mittheilungen*, 1882, p. 313. The diary of Archbishop Odo Rigaldi, our classical witness for actual monastic practice in the thirteenth century, is full of complaints that, in ill-disciplined houses, the monks are neglecting this duty of tale-bearing.

the monastery in all probability was hardly broken"<sup>1</sup>. St Benedict himself evidently allowed a certain amount of quiet talking; we may infer this, among other passages, from that sentence of chapter 6 where he writes: "scurrilities, or idle words, or words which move to laughter, *in any part of the monastery*, we condemn by a perpetual prohibition." As Abbot Butler says, his aim was rather taciturnity than absolute silence. But his prohibitions, often stiffening into somewhat inelastic bye-laws, provoked a natural reaction. I have already had to point out how the brethren, forbidden to speak with their lips, learned to talk on their fingers, and how elaborate were the codes of signs invented in different places<sup>2</sup>.

At about 9 came tierce, often followed in great houses by High Mass. The multiplication of Masses since St Benedict's time has already been explained; nearly all the monks' richest benefactions were received on condition of saying Masses for the founder's soul. The number of statutory Masses thus became very great; at St-Riquier, even as early as 800 A.D., at least two public Masses and 30 private were said daily<sup>3</sup>. After High Mass came dinner, at about 11, which was a common medieval hour. In summer, this was followed by a siesta. Then came the main working time, in the places where the monks still followed their Founder's prescriptions of work. It is difficult for outsiders, and even (to judge from their vagueness) for those who are intimately conversant with modern monastic services, to discover the exact times of sext and none in the Middle Ages proper; there was probably much diversity here. We are on safe ground again with vespers, which were said about sunset, and were followed on ordinary days by supper. Then came *collation*, a public reading of part of John Cassian's *Collationes*, which, on non-supper days, was accompanied by a slight and informal repast; hence the modern signification of the word. Last came compline, from which the monks went straight to bed.

Field-labour was practically dead among the monks before our period; the scene of such work as they did before and after

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *l.c.* 288.

<sup>2</sup> An amusing note on these signs may be found in S. R. Maitland's *Dark Ages* (ed. 1890, p. 440). The subject is dealt with fully in Martène, *Rit. lib.* v, c. 18, p. 288 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Martène, *Comment.* p. 816 (cap. 62).

noon, and of such social intercourse as they enjoyed, was mainly the cloister. This has been excellently described by Dean Church<sup>1</sup>

A monk's life at that period was eminently a social one; he lived night and day in public; and the cell seems to have been an occasional retreat, or reserved for the higher officers. The cloister was the place of business, instruction, reading, and conversation, the common study, workshop, and parlour of all the inmates of the house—the professed brethren; the young men whom they were teaching or preparing for life, either as monks or in the world; the children (*infantes*) who formed the school attached to the house, many of whom had been dedicated by their parents to this kind of service. In this cloister, open apparently to the weather but under shelter, all sat, when they were not at service in church, or assembled in the chapter, or at their meals in the refectory, or resting in the dormitory for their midday sleep; all teaching, reading, writing, copying, or any handicraft in which a monk might employ himself, went on here. Here the children learned their letters, or read aloud, or practised their singing under their masters; and here, when the regular and fixed arrangements of the day allowed it, conversation was carried on. A cloister of this kind was the lecture-room where Lanfranc taught “grammar,” gave to Norman pupils elementary notions of what an Italian of that age saw in Virgil and St Augustin, and perhaps expounded St Paul's Epistles; where Anselm, among other pupils, caught from him the enthusiasm of literature; where, when Lanfranc was gone, his pupil carried on his master's work as a teacher, and where he discussed with sympathising and inquisitive minds the great problems which had begun to open on his mind. In a cloister like this the news, the gossip of the world and of the neighbourhood was collected and communicated: rumours, guesses, and stories of the day, the strange fortunes of kings and kingdoms, were reported, commented on, picturesquely dressed up and made matter of solemn morals or of grotesque jokes, as they might be now in clubs and newspapers. Here went on the literary work of the time<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *St Anselm*, 1905, p. 46

<sup>2</sup> Church, however, has evidently failed to realize how little allowance was made for these very natural amenities by monastic legislators and disciplinarians, and even in St Benedict's Rule.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE MIRACLES OF ST BENEDICT

SUCH was the monk's daily routine at the dignified and well-ordered abbeys which formed the aristocracy of the Order. But we must now look farther afield and deeper under the surface, in order to realize the meaning of the great reforms of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

From the earlier reform, that of Cluny, we have fragmentary documents which show clearly both the initial need for such a revival, and the limits within which we can confidently regard it as successful. Before this Cluniac revival had leavened the general mass of Benedictinism, it had spent its own main force. Towards the end of the eleventh century, while some were still accusing the Cluniacs of pharisaical self-righteousness, others looked upon them as a salt which had lost its savour; and the great Cistercian reform of the twelfth century was a determined attempt to accomplish what the Cluniacs had by this time practically abandoned. In general, Cistercianism instituted a still closer system of interdependence between house and house; in detail, it aimed at a still stricter return to the actual provisions of the Rule.

For, in emphasizing Benedict's practical genius, and the moderation of his claims, we must not forget that the Rule postulates a real religious vocation in the case of every monk. It was admirably adapted for all sorts of men who had the root of the matter in them; but we must pay it the compliment of recognizing also that it was not suited to those who want to make the best of both worlds. That, however, is just what the *homme moyen sensuel* wants to do; such men, therefore, had no proper place in a monastery except where the discipline was strong enough to mould them to the Rule, in spite of individual recalcitrance. In other words, Benedict postulates that the large majority should have a real vocation; but naturally, as monasteries multiplied, men of real religious vocation were soon outnumbered, or at best very strongly diluted, with ordinary natures

of passive mediocrity, or even with self-seeking and vicious characters. For the very popularity of the monasteries, and the general respect for their inmates, soon brought them endowments which enabled many monks to live more easily than they could have lived in the world, except so far as their own conscience forbade this. It was not every abbot who had the self-control of Gregory's saintly Isaac, who

found a desert place, where he built for himself a humble dwelling. . . . And when his disciples frequently urged him, with all humility, to accept the possessions which were offered for the use of the monastery, this careful guardian of his own poverty would maintain his own courageous opinion, saying: "The monk who seeketh a possession upon earth is no monk at all" (*Dial.* III, 14).

We shall see that Peter the Venerable of Cluny, in order to justify Cluniac relaxations of the Rule, pleaded how the monastery of Benedict's immediate disciple, St Maur, had accumulated such abundant possessions that the saint and his brethren found no real reason for manual labour. The surviving evidence for monastic life from St Benedict's day to about the eleventh century is pitifully scanty, and therefore most tantalizing, compared with later testimonies. But everything points to the conclusion that the average monastery soon became almost as secularized and feudalized as the rest of the church. Certainly this is so in the eleventh century, when the documents begin to become abundant<sup>1</sup>.

Benedict and Gregory lived in an iron age; and for many centuries after them it is difficult to note much improvement in general society. There were strong survivals of paganism; much of current Christianity was merely paganism veneered; we can see the process, even while we admire Gregory's tact and statesmanship, in the letter which that great pope sent for the guidance of St Augustine of Canterbury. I have already pointed out the natural result of this tolerance; the "beasts offered to the devil" by the pagan Saxons developed into the "church ales" of the later Middle Ages, and into other abusive

<sup>1</sup> It was so already in the time of St Odo of Cluny, who died in 942. His *Collationes* are full of complaints of clerical, and in particular of monastic, abuses; he cries for a root-and-branch reform. See Chapter XVII here below, *ad init.* Mabillon treats it as a plain historical fact that the monasteries were already deeply decayed in the days of Charles the Great; he devotes a good many pages to the causes of this decay. (AA.SS.O.S.B. vol. v, introd. §§ 137-144.)

practices which are complained of in diocesan synods. But the synods were powerless; and these feasts themselves, though never quite civilized, survived to the Reformation and beyond. The church, then, with all her power, was obliged to tolerate many pagan survivals; the state was seldom strong enough to put down private war; and feudalism pressed upon the common man with a weight which is minimized only by impressionists like Mr Chesterton, for whom history forms one department of romance. In such a society monasticism was a strongly civilizing influence; but it took a very strong tinge also from the society which it helped to civilize. It is unjust to ignore the strength and the comparative beneficence of the monastic system; but we falsify history just as fatally by ignoring the fact that the monk's greatest power has nearly always coincided with very rudimentary stages of social development in an outside world from which even the monastic vow could seldom altogether deliver the cloisterer.

To understand the Cistercian reform, which is the next stage of the present study, we must look more closely at pre-Cistercian monasticism than modern historians are accustomed to look. The materials, by about 1100 A.D., are already almost embarrassing in their number and variety, though far less copious than what we shall find from the thirteenth century onwards. I shall here utilize mainly the *Miracula Sancti Benedicti*, the chronicles of Ralph Glaber and Ordericus Vitalis; Guibert of Nogent's *De Vita Sua*; and the earlier chronicles of St-Gall<sup>1</sup>. These show us something of the inner life of four of the greatest and most orderly among the French abbeys, and one of the best in Germany. In addition to these, I shall draw freely upon the admirably wide and miscellaneous collection of contemporary records, from all countries of Europe, gathered by Mabillon in the 5th volume of his *Annales Benedictini*, which just covers the half-century preceding the greatness of the Cistercians (1067-1116).

These five abbeys—Fleury, Cluny, St-Évroul, St-Germer-de-Fly, and St-Gall,—were perhaps never more flourishing, on

<sup>1</sup> Glaber and Guibert are accessible in French, in the series superintended by F. Guizot; Ekkehard and the other St-Gall chronicles can be had cheap in German (tr. Meyer v. Knonau); Ordericus is Englished in Bohn's series (4 volumes).

the whole, than between 1050 and 1100 A.D. It will be convenient to take the first for our central point, since we have abundant intimate evidence for it in the collection edited by E. de Certain for the Société d'Histoire de France, under the title of *Miracles de St-Benoît*<sup>1</sup>.

St Benedict's own abbey of Monte Cassino was sacked and deserted during the Lombard invasions, in 580 A.D. Meanwhile, the abbey of Fleury had been founded near Orléans not long before 550; and its second abbot conceived the ambition of securing St Benedict's body for his house. He was seconded by one Aigulf, whose zeal for monastic discipline, as abbot of Lérins, finally earned him martyrdom and canonization. Aigulf, in these early years only a young monk of Fleury, undertook the journey to Italy on his abbot's behalf. St Benedict himself favoured the project by a miraculous light, which guided Aigulf by night to the hidden tomb; he broke it open, found the bones of the Saint and his sister Scholastica, and carried them off in a basket. The rest of his adventure may be told in Abbé Rocher's summary:

But behold! that night a voice from heaven, echoed from the mountain flanks, warned Aigulf and his companions to depart with all possible speed, and without a moment's pause. The fact is that, at Rome, Pope Vitalinus had been warned in a dream of the loss which, by his negligence, threatened Italy. This abstraction of the holy relics from Monte Cassino had been revealed to him, and he had hastened to send a cohort of Lombard soldiers on the heels of the pious thieves, who escaped this formidable pursuit only by a miracle. The unfortunate pontiff was reduced to realize the melancholy truth of an event which had been revealed to him only in order to inspire him with regret and to leave remorse in his bosom.

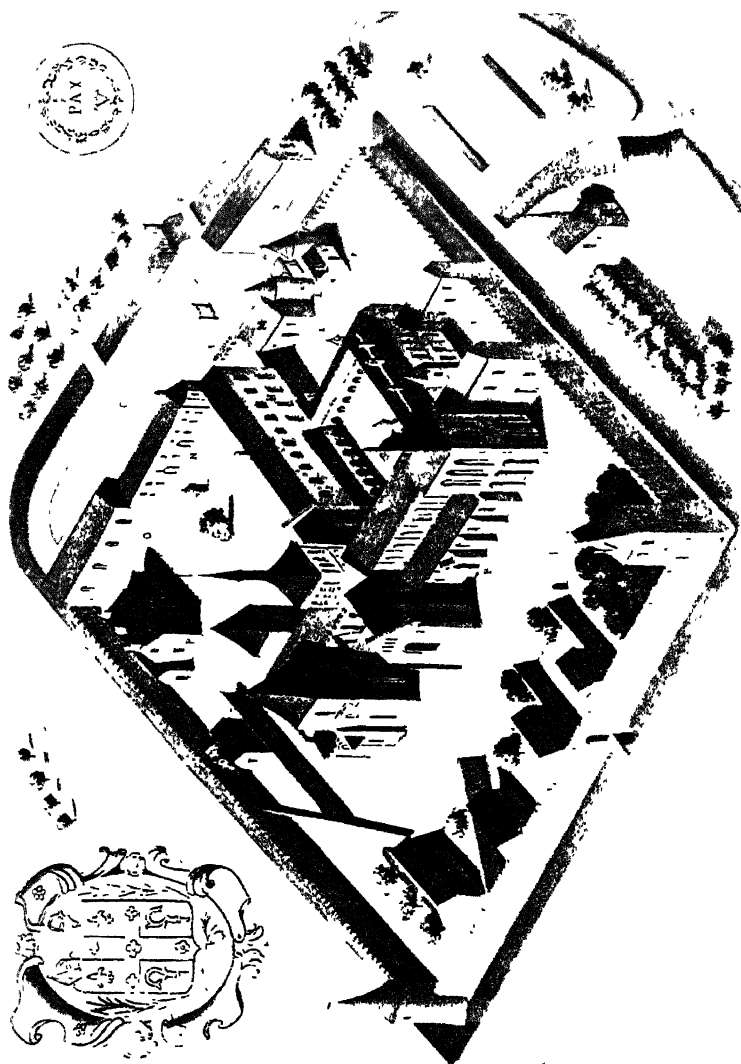
These pious thieves, under favour of a dense cloud which the Almighty sent to hide them from the papal soldiers, reached Fleury safely; and the holy bones marked their road with miracles. The brethren of Monte Cassino, naturally enough, have often contested this story: but the successful theft is admitted by a Cassinese monk, Paul Warnefrid, who wrote his *History of the*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also the rather uncritical but laborious and valuable monograph by Abbé Rocher, *Hist. de l'Abbaye Royale de St-B.-s.-L.* (Orléans, 1865.) Fleury, which stands not far from Orléans, is frequently called St-Benoît-sur-Loire. The little town has now 1500 inhabitants; the abbey church still attracts many tourists.

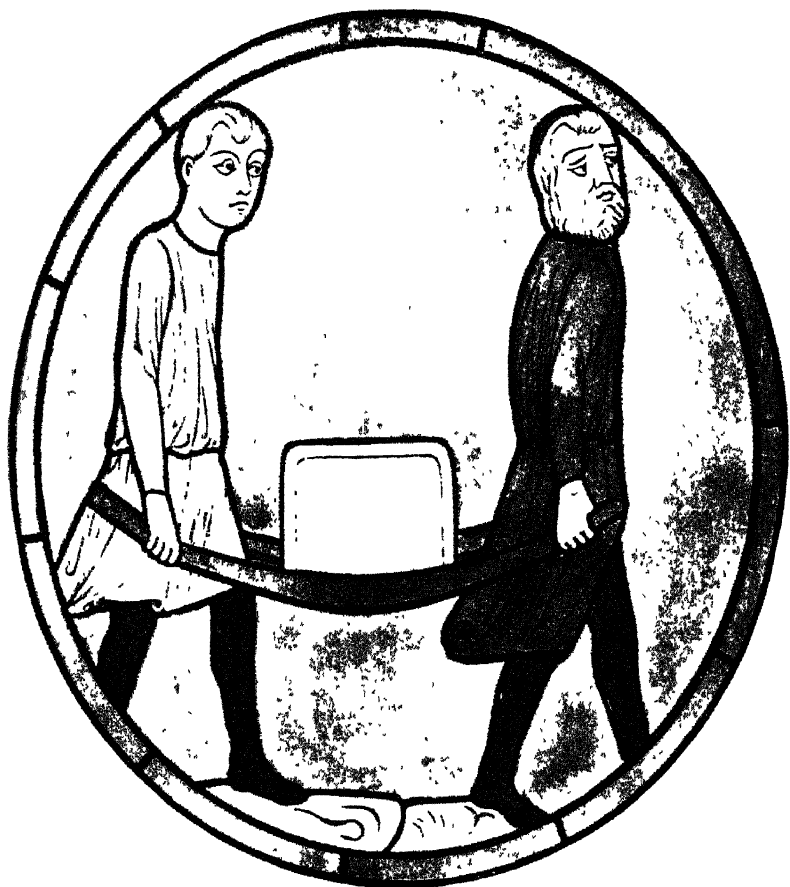
*Lombards* in about 775; and it may safely be said that few, if any, French Benedictines, during the Middle Ages, doubted that the Founder's bones rested at Fleury-sur-Loire. Thanks to this belief, Fleury soon became one of the richest monasteries in Europe, and a whole town rose up around it. The *Miracles* give us a vivid picture of the abbey and its surroundings from about 850 A.D. till past 1100. The buildings, naturally, grew during this period; but there are no great indications of change in the manner of life. We see a wide circuit of white walls and towers<sup>1</sup> enclosing still taller walls and towers within their precincts, while the thatched hovels of the townsfolk nestle just outside. The whole is dominated by a regular feudal keep, constructed at least as early as 889, and rebuilt on a far greater scale by Abbot Gauzlin in about 1025; for the abbot is himself a great baron, and has influence enough with the king to procure the destruction of rival baronial fortresses<sup>2</sup>. The clearest picture we get is on the occasion of the great fire of 1095, which destroyed almost the whole town. It began in the north, from which quarter a dry wind had long been blowing, and burned southwards with increasing fury all through the night, so that only a few outlying houses were still left at dawn. The monks were in deadly terror for their own buildings, some of which were still unfinished and roofed only with thatch. While the more vigorous carried St Benedict's bones and most of the relics and valuables to places of greater safety, the elders went forth with the bones of St Maur; but they had no sooner issued from their gate than the reek drove them back. Thence they mounted upon the lofty precinct-wall, and prayed as they stretched forth the relics towards the burning town; while the abbot led a procession round and round the inner precincts, chanting litanies as he went. A sudden change of wind saved the abbey this time; it had not been so fortunate in 1026, when a great fire had consumed not only the church but almost all the domestic buildings:

<sup>1</sup> St-Gall, too, was strongly fortified: Ekkehard, pp. 38 a, 61 a; the bastioned walls of other monasteries still remain, as at St Mary's, York, Battle, Maulbronn and Prémontré.

<sup>2</sup> *Miracles*, p. 245, Rocher, p. 199. For the details in this section I shall give exact references only on the most important points; the original documents are fairly accessible and not very bulky. In the second series of my *Medieval Garner*, I hope to publish full translations of several very interesting episodes which can here be only mentioned in passing.



THE ABBEY OF FLEURY IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY



A MASON'S CARRYING-TRAY

on two earlier occasions, however, when a great part of the town had been consumed, St Benedict had kept his abbey almost unharmed<sup>1</sup>. Such conflagrations were very frequent in medieval monasteries; the great fire at St-Gall in the eleventh century was caused by a schoolboy who, sent to fetch a rod for his misdeeds, caught up a brand from the hearth and thrust it under the shingles of the roof in order to create a diversion<sup>2</sup>.

But, easily as the huts of Fleury burned, easily they were rebuilt, and the abbey soon had another little town nestling at its gates. Townsfolk and peasants were in strict dependence on the abbey, which, after all, had made them appreciably more prosperous than they could otherwise have been. Fleury had a covenant with the two other great abbeys of Marmoutier and Ste-Marie-de-Blois, according to which, if the serfs of the different abbeys intermarried, their brood was to be equally divided between the father's and the mother's owners<sup>3</sup>. At an earlier date, this compromise seemed sacrilegious to the chronicler of Fleury, who would have wished the ownership of doubtful serfs to be decided by wager of battle. The "bestial" legist who had proposed this non-combatant method of division was struck with palsy, as a warning to all who wrong St Benedict. A serf might indeed prefer to be St Benedict's chattel rather than a lay lord's; but it was only natural that he should love freedom more than either; and we have an interesting story of one Stabilis, who, eluding his taskmasters for a few years, raised himself to the position of a squireen and married a noble wife: yet here, again, the Saint's arm proved too long for the sinner, and "this unstable and miserable presumption of my lord Stabilis" was amply avenged in the end<sup>4</sup>. Few serfs can have made even this sort of ineffectual bid for freedom: a far more frequent cause of friction was the question of the holy-day. The villein had not too much time for his own land in any case; but here, thrice a year, apart from other general festivals of the church, the serfs of Fleury were expected to abstain from work in honour of St Benedict—on March 21, July 9 and December 4.

<sup>1</sup> p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Ekkehard, p. 36 b.

<sup>3</sup> Rocher, p. 70: cf. *Miracles*, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 287, 218. Compare Ekkehard's indignation with the villeins of St-Gall who aspired to be yeomen and keep hunting-dogs, 30 a.



This was not always popular: two of the recalcitrants, on separate occasions, pleaded that cessation from work spelt lack of bread. The monks' point of view was different:

This hard race of country-folk, whose semi-pagan mind is open enough to the cult of magic, hath a dull disbelief in the institutes sanctioned by our holy fathers, deeming them vain and frivolous: wherefore they care little if any of their fellows should refuse to celebrate the feast of any saint.

The temptation was all the greater, because those who were not abbey serfs became, in this case, natural "blacklegs"; a girl from elsewhere might saunter down the streets of Fleury with her spindle and distaff, answering the expostulations of the rest of her sex with a contemptuous, "You, who are the Saint's bond-women, may keep holiday and celebrate the day as solemnly as you choose; but I owe him nothing, and I mean to earn my bread for today." We need scarcely wonder that, before this scoffer had reached the end of the street, an invisible hand smote her on the jaw so that the blood ran down her teeth; that is a type of miracle which will cease only when labour-disputes are no more. Lightning from heaven took vengeance upon the peasant who distrusted the weather and carted his hay on St Benedict's day; yet, despite these examples, and in the face of a general public opinion which at Fleury, as at Ephesus, recognized the neighbourhood's debt to its tutelary deity, feast-breaking was evidently not infrequent<sup>1</sup>.

The debt to the abbey, indeed, was evident and indisputable. The monks' hospitality, if not so profuse as it is often represented, was a very great reality, and there is no reason to disbelieve that thousands, literally, flocked to Fleury for healing. Not that St Benedict had a monopoly in this field, even at Fleury; many preferred, in the first place at any rate, to put their trust in the old-wives' charms of their pagan ancestors. Moreover Veranus himself, abbot of Fleury, "boasted himself as one who knew somewhat of medicine," and had the temerity first to treat his own quartan fever in the light of this knowledge, and then for nearly two months to spend his money upon more regular practitioners, until at last he "remembered" that health might

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 210, 291, 329-333; cf. Mabillon, AA.SS.O.S.B. II (1669), 670.

possibly be found even nearer home, and appealed to the virtues of St Benedict. A girl of noble birth, again, who lived only 18 miles from Fleury, was unpatriotic enough to visit the miracle-working tombs of St Denis by Paris, and of St Martial at Limoges, in preference to her neighbour St Benedict; "far fowls have fair feathers." But these distant shrines did her no good, and her father opined that the local saint, "irritated at our contempt, will not now choose to pray God for our daughter." Yet Benedict was mollified by the girl's promise to be his bondmaid for ever, despite her noble birth; she was healed, married, "and some of her descendants remain as bondmen of the brethren, no unprofitable servants, even unto this day"<sup>1</sup>. At Fleury, as in other similar medieval records, we find that a very large proportion were mentally sick, demoniacs<sup>2</sup>.

Some pious souls came to spend their last years in hired houses as near as possible to the abbey gates; this was a common practice of the time. A whole colony of devout women was scattered here and there at Molesme until it grew into a regular nunnery; Guibert gives a vivid picture of his mother's spiritual dependence on the great abbey of St-Germer; the community for which *The Ancren Riwe* was written marks a slightly more advanced stage of development; a very interesting study might be made of these individual lady-penitents who coalesced into groups, to coalesce further into full-blown nunneries<sup>3</sup>. To others, the first and most pressing need was health of body; such folk often came with a persistent expectancy which earned its own reward; at Fleury, as at Lourdes, there were some who sought and found. "A certain crippled woman, named Mary, had her little hut for fifteen years over against our church door." Another had lived nearly four years on the alms of the brethren before she was healed. A cripple from Sens lay for three months, day and night, "outside our kitchen door, begging his subsistence from them that passed by"; when charitable folk carried him at last into the church, he was healed. Other cripples, half-borne by some friend, staggered painfully up to the altar; one girl came

<sup>1</sup> pp. 354, 363, 318, 169.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 65, 67, 68, 69, 178, 207, 260, 325, 328, 339, 361, 362.

<sup>3</sup> For Guibert's mother see cols. 1090, 1106; cf. 1139-41; other cases in D'Achery, *Spicil.* II (1723), 905 a and 910.

to Fleury borne by two friends in a mason's carrying-tray, as though she had been a block of stone; a peasant had made himself for the journey "a barrow such as men use to carry dung when they purge the cow-stalls." Thus came the poor; and the rich showed a no less literal faith. One knight brought the chains with which an enemy-knight had bound him in prison, but which St Benedict had helped him to break: another, remorseful for his own misdeeds, came as a penitent in self-imposed fetters. A young noble was cut off in the hey-day of his sins, killed by a Fleury champion in defence of the abbey's peasants and cattle.

His father and mother, seeing this son dead, upon whom they had set all their hopes (for they had none but him), wailed and wept beyond all that words can tell, mourning with inconsolable grief for him whom they had cherished with undivided love. But, dreading the last judgement of God in His justice (for they were godfearing folk), they took counsel how they might do best for his soul whose body was now past all hope, and how the son might find indulgence when he had rushed with such abominable sin upon his death. Wherefore they took with them the venerable bishop of Auxerre, and hastened to Fleury with their son's body and with great funeral-pomp. There, falling at the feet of abbot Hugues and our whole congregation, they besought that their dead son might be loosed from his sins by our prayers, holding it for certain that his crime would be absolved by the Almighty Judge if we, whom he had injured, should begin by forgiving him then and there from the bottom of our hearts. Wherefore they placed in the dead man's hand a chalice of a pound's weight and of the purest gold, which they offered as a pledge, hoping that he would earn a readier pardon for his crime if they paid some sort of recompense for his rash act, and believing that, as often as we should sacrifice from this chalice to God on high, their son should not be without some share in that sacrifice. The brethren therefore, moved with pity and commiseration, offered sacrifice for him in full congregation to God Almighty, begging absolution for his iniquity, which they themselves remitted in so far as it concerned them, according to the possibility granted by Christ to His faithful people. Then, completing his obsequies with all due honour, they dismissed that company. So the parents went homeward with the noble folk who had stood by them, carrying with them no small consolation of their son's salvation<sup>1</sup>.

For good or for evil, when faith was there, it was a very literal faith. This is one of the first things that strikes the modern

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 207, 256, 353, 369, 165, 342, 303, 335.

traveller; one of the strongest and most persistent of our soldiers' impressions in France and Belgium. The church, to those who recognize it at all—and, at moments, even to those who have always hitherto refused recognition—is a natural daily home and refuge in a sense which cannot be predicated of any Protestant community, even in Alpine villages where the Sunday services are as universally attended as in any Catholic village. There is something very touching in the familiarity with which Italians bring not only their baskets and bundles to church, but even their pet animals; and herein they are true children of the Middle Ages. We find one of abbot Hugues' pet peacocks wandering about the church of Savigny, and perching sacrilegiously upon the altar; where, however, he was at once paralyzed, and remained immovable until they had made a candle of the bird's full length, from crest to tail, and consumed it before the Lord in expiation. The good monk Ralph is careful to warn us that, though the Psalmist says, "Thou, Lord, shalt save both man and beast," we must not apply this too literally to the miraculous cure of this bird: "for, as St Paul saith, we know that God careth not for these irrational beasts, save in so far as they contribute to the use and necessities of rational beings"<sup>1</sup>. But far more touching is the filial faith of the maimed peasant (p. 353). The church in this story is that of the dependent cell of Pressy. A knight of that place attacked one of the abbey serfs without just provocation,

and beat him so cruelly that he broke his arm. The peasant therefore, finding none to avenge his wrong, and having no champion for his quarrel—for his aggressor was a proud knight who owed reverence to no man—this peasant, I say, in his distress had recourse to his master St Benedict. He entered the church, came nigh unto the altar, and, laying thereon his crushed arm, poured forth these words with contrite mind and with bitter groans. "O holy Benedict, thou very lord, I confess myself thy serf, and I confess thee for my rightful lord. Thou seest this poor crushed arm; it was thine, and no man but thee could rightly work his will upon it. If thou hadst broken mine arm, I could have had no plea against thee, for it was under thy law. But, my lord, wherefore hast thou suffered this Hugh Bidulf, who had no right

<sup>1</sup> p. 281. Guibert (col. 959 b) tells us how the monks' pet fawn wandered into the church with a broken leg, came up to the altar "with the curiosity of a beast," and was healed.

over my arm, to crush it thus? Know therefore that, from this day forth, I will be no servant of thee nor of thine, unless thou wreak just vengeance upon this man's arm and body." The brethren in the church, moved to tears at the sound of these and such like words of his, wept with him, added their groans to his, and joined in his prayer. The peasant, having liberated his soul, made his way home as best he could.

St Benedict smote the knight with palsy on the same side as the peasant's broken arm, and he died a lingering death of pain.

For this conception of saintly help as a business-contract, though it comes out more strongly at Fleury, where the documents are so abundant, was common everywhere in the Middle Ages. Glaber tells us how, when St Peter's at Rome was burned, devout worshippers called upon the saint to come and rescue his church, under penalty of losing henceforth the faith of his worshippers. When Canterbury Cathedral was burned down in 1175, the pious multitude "beat the walls and pavement, hurling grisly curses at God and His saints, under whose protection the building stood." In the year 1090, when the great abbey-church of Lorsch was burned, "complaints and obloquy were rife in the whole province; for men said that the abbey could not truly possess St Nazarius's body, since the monks had not felt his patronage at this great time of peril." Many similar instances might be collected; but at Fleury this spirit permeates the records all through<sup>1</sup>. When burglars stole some of the church ornaments, a monk named Christian cried aloud against the saint's negligence: "Dost thou sleep like a sluggard?...since thou canst not defend these ornaments, I care not though the thieves steal thy very breeches!" A youth, going in to worship, left his horse at the church door; coming out, he found it stolen, and cried, "What, most holy Benedict! how wilt thou pass on thy worshipper's prayers to Christ, when thou canst not guard a single fourfooted beast?" A certain old woman, harassed by unjust taxes, "ran to the church, tucked up the altar-cloths, and beat the altar with rods, crying thus upon Benedict as though he had been present: 'Decrepit old Benedict—*Benedicte*

<sup>1</sup> Glaber, col. 637, translated in my *Medieval Garner*, p. 5: Gervase of Canterbury, R.S. i, 5, cf. Stanley's *Memorials of Canterbury* under that year: Mabillon, *Annals*, v, 258: *Miracles*, pp. 59, 130, 149, 180, 184, 185, 283, 328, 353.

*vetustissime!*—remiss and sluggardly, what dost thou? Why sleepest thou?" A mason, working at the church vault, fell from the scaffolding; the monks prayed earnestly for his recovery, for

in the second place we feared lest, if he were to die, the building would be interrupted by the dejection that would fall upon the whole of the commonalty, who were vying with each other in contributing money and personal service; for the vulgar herd is fickle, bent like a reed in either direction by a chance blast, and they might have murmured that our father Benedict had no providence for his own monastery, and that he cared not what adversity fell upon the work.

If the people took that view of the saint's miracles, certainly the monks gave them every excuse. Out of the 139 stories of miracles in this Fleury record, by five different writers, 69 are definitely interested—punishments for invasion of St Benedict's property, irreverence to his church or his feast days, etc. etc.<sup>1</sup> And the book makes us realize the importance of Glaber's remark that, at the beginning of the eleventh century, there was an epidemic of newly-discovered relics, which brought considerable pecuniary profit<sup>2</sup>. We understand, too, why the abbey remained deaf to the pleas of Pope Zacharias and King Pippin combined, when the former insinuated that it would be a work of piety and mercy to allow "the bones of this most holy saint to be restored to his own tomb, whence they had been secretly stolen," *i.e.* to Monte Cassino. The abbot replied piously and diplomatically, "If, by reason of our sins, St Benedict himself wishes to leave Gaul and return to his native fields, I confess that he is perfectly able to bring this about, and that our own wish should by no means stand in his way." After which, he ordered the bones to be safely locked up, and his monks to sleep on the threshold of the chapel door. When, next day, Arch-

<sup>1</sup> Abbé Rocher himself feels that some apology is due on that score (p. 47). "It must be confessed that the historians of the *M. of S. B.* have not always written with much critical enlightenment, or with perfect disinterestedness. It is evident that, in certain citations of marvels, their object was to frighten the unjust and greedy lords against whom they were physically helpless."

<sup>2</sup> Col. 655. Cf. *Miracles*, p. 310. The Fleury relics were carried for once to Gourdon in Berry, where they stopped a plague; "all men may imagine how many gifts were now forthcoming, every man hastening to give of his best, lest he should seem less devout than others." Ordericus is full of the invention of relics, and Guibert wrote the most famous and plain-spoken of all medieval treatises on this subject (*De Pignoribus Sanctorum*).

bishop Remi of Rouen, as papal and royal emissary, would have penetrated with his suite to the holy sepulchre, their eyes were afflicted with such a mist of blindness that they were glad to grope their way safely out of the chapel<sup>1</sup>. The Cassinese monks, who accompanied him, were bought off with a few minor bones of their saint, and (if we may believe the Fleury chronicler) retired with gratitude.

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 37-42.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE NEED FOR REFORM

IN these earlier records, as in Jocelin of Brakelond more than a century later, we may read between the lines a quiet conviction in the average monk's mind that he was making a pretty good bargain with both worlds. Those of Fleury had palatial buildings in this "Golden Valley" of theirs, from which the vine-clad slopes began to rise not two hundred yards from the town<sup>1</sup>. If their possessions brought them frequently into conflict with neighbouring lords, they yet knew how to make up for their comparative lack of physical force; and we have seen how great men sometimes crept to their altar to do penance for unjust trespasses<sup>2</sup>. Trial by battle was a frequent remedy for disputes; but there it was not the monk who had to fight in person; and he had no religious scruples against such risk of life on his tenant's part<sup>3</sup>. Outside the monastery, private war raged everywhere between lord and lord, attended with diabolical massacres; heathen invaders broke in with fire and sword; famines drove men to eat human flesh; wild beasts preyed upon the depopulated countryside; St Antony's fire was almost an endemic plague—a poison, as we are now told, generated from corrupt rye-bread. Even the later Orderic, writing from his more civilized Normandy, gives almost as sad a picture in these matters as Glaber and the *Miracles*.

Incidentally, we sometimes get very living portraits of these tyrants who vexed the abbeys, from the greatest nobles down to the smallest squireens. A whole band of marauders from Burgundy once came down upon the Fleury lands, with a jongleur in their van who led them like Taillefer at Hastings, "harping and singing great deeds of arms and the wars of their forefathers, that he might excite his comrades to greater fury in fulfilling their evil purposes." Again, that countess of Bayeux who built the famous donjon of Ivry, unmatched in its day, is said to have beheaded the luckless architect lest he should outdo

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 253, 323.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 181, 335.

<sup>3</sup> pp. 57, 289.



that masterpiece in working for some other lord. And the *Miracles* give us a vivid picture of another meaner beast at home in his feudal lair; one who needed only that countess's more magnificent opportunities to make himself no less intolerable to the whole countryside. Alberic, a petty lord of the Orléanais, preyed upon the possessions of Fleury and died a violent death. His brother Séguin, momentarily impressed by this tragedy, came to do penance at the abbey for his brother's soul; but he soon hardened his heart and became worse than his brother, taking the abbey serfs to his prisons and their cattle to his own byres.

One day at last, when he had fallen upon the land adjacent to our grange of Matrigny and driven off a herd of swine, we sent men who should demand their beasts back and persuade him to amendment; they found him in his own dwelling. Now this was a tower of wood; for he was a man of might, one of the nobler inhabitants of the same town<sup>1</sup> to which Alberic also had belonged. This tower had an upper solar, where this Séguin dwelt with his household, and wherein he talked and feasted and slept at night. Beneath this solar was the cellar, wherein were divers storerooms fitted for the conservation of the necessities of daily life. Now the floor of that solar was formed, as usual, of rough-hewn boards, broad and very long, but of no great thickness.

In this rough hall the messengers found him, but to little purpose; he swore he would rather burn the abbey than restore the swine.

Thus speaking, he stood at the end of one of those planks wherewith his solar was floored; and he had scarce belched forth those words from his venomous mouth when the end whereon he stood slid downwards; the other end of the plank rose high in the air; and he, falling headlong, plunged his head wedge-wise between two chests in that cellar below, while his body fell athwart one of those same chests. His servants cried aloud and ran down, but only to find their master's neck broken and his body reft of breath<sup>2</sup>.

Many were doubtless impressed by St Benedict's long arm in these cases; but the last decrepit days of some tyrants bore even

<sup>1</sup> Or, possibly, *castle*.

<sup>2</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 336, 298; Ordericus, 627. The chronicler points out that St Benedict's personal enemy, the priest Florentius, had died by a similar accident. (Gregory, *Dialogues*, bk II, c. 8.)

more impressive testimony than the sudden death of these others. We have seen how common it was at this time, though it became far less common in the later Middle Ages, for a man to redeem his whole past by becoming a *monachus ad succurrendum*—i.e. by taking the vows and the habit in the last years, or even days or hours, of his life. Ordericus is full of such cases; a good many are recorded in the *Annales*. St Anselm, as we have seen, advised the Countess Matilda to hold herself always ready for a momentary refuge of this kind (*Ep.* lib. iv, no. 37). As late as 1220, Robert Lord Berkeley "was buried in the church of St Augustine [at Bristol], over against the high altar, in a monk's cowl," and left a rich benefaction to the abbey<sup>1</sup>. Many good people did thus; a good many ruffians did the same; their children might indeed contest the gifts which thus fell to the abbey, but these malcontents themselves, when their own death drew near, were often glad to come and die under St Benedict's care. So that, although the monk enjoyed something far short of perfect peace amid this troubled world, yet he enjoyed a great deal more than most men. The worst enemy to monastic peace, perhaps, was the monk himself. Medieval disciplinarians tell us what modern inmates of monasteries sometimes confess frankly also, that this daily and hourly intercourse, from the moment of admission to the grave, generates great courtesy in some, but great friction in other cases. The leaden weight of monotony and depression too often made men a weariness to themselves and to their fellows; this was the characteristically religious fault of *accidie*, sinking sometimes even to despair. Again, in the artificially restricted perspective of a meticulously-disciplined house, causes microscopic in themselves might breed the intolerable irritation of a grain of sand in the eye, or the gradual corruption of a dead fly in the ointment of the apothecary. "We see many Religious" (so wrote one of the best of them) "who condemn the greatest things for Christ's sake, yet still keep the old Adam in the smallest things, and are moved to wrath for a writing-stylus, a needle, or a pen"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Smyth, I, 71.

<sup>2</sup> The Franciscan Bernard of Besse at the end of the thirteenth century (*Speculum Disciplinæ*, pars II, c. vi, § 7). This book was very generally attributed to St Bonaventura. See other evidence in *Mod. Lang. Review*, VII (1912), 103.

The monk, then, was entrenched behind his precinct-walls against many of the temporal troubles of that unquiet world; and he had a still greater advantage in the face of spiritual enemies. Everywhere, within his own enclosure, he trod on hallowed ground; God's courts were his abode. Monks and wayfarers sometimes saw celestial light brooding over the abbey, and heard celestial harmonies<sup>1</sup>. Heresy was rampant throughout the province; there was a great *auto-da-fé* at Orléans, where some leaders of the sect were canons of the Cathedral; but to Fleury the heretics came only as spectres, to publish their own disgrace (p. 247). One of the monks saw them

as if creeping forth from the depths of the latrines (a fit abode for their merits) and thrusting themselves into the monks' dormitory, where they went from bed to bed and scanned each occupant. Yet, without delay, our father Benedict, our steward and unwearied seneschal, came from the church, radiant with light, and stood in their path. Then, driving them before him with his pastoral staff, he chased them to the northern gate of the abbey, where they fell into the clutches of countless demons waiting without, and were dragged off to the torture they had deserved. Whereby we see clearly how Benedict doth neither slumber nor sleep, seeing that, by God's grace, he doth so keep watch over his sworn vassals of Fleury.

Glaber, Orderic and Guibert are also full of touches showing how securely the average monk felt himself entrenched in orthodoxy, amid a world which was only too strongly tainted with heresy and infidelity.

Devils, it is true, haunted the sacred precincts; but this persistence often bore testimony to their desire of avenging frequent defeats in the past. If to the monk they were more often visible in bodily form than to other men, this was because the monk's spiritual vision was able to pierce their disguises. There, in their great church, they saw the demoniac who had burst his bonds, dispersed all resisting forces in his way, and rushed into the Sanctuary. There, chained by the waist to a column, and restlessly pacing all the length of his chain like a wild beast, he continually chanted things full of sound and fury, with the ever recurring refrain as of a minstrel-*joculariter*—"O God! deliver me from this Ancient Enemy who haunteth me! Prick him, St Bene-

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles*, pp. 268-72.

dict, prick him!" In another corner is one who has taken refuge there from the boys who hunted him down the street. Prostrate before the altar of the Lady-Chapel lies another who also had strayed in, and whom the monks fear to touch; others are brought in chained by their guardians. A mad girl scandalizes the congregation by her demoniacal blasphemies: "Now, Benedict, thou ancient clod of clay!...Be not deceived; I [the demon] will no more leave her for thee than for any other decrepit greybeard." Though not simultaneous, these are frequent scenes; but frequently St Benedict triumphs where other saints had failed. Three great flies, of exceeding blackness, were seen to leave one man's mouth at the moment of his deliverance; from another the devil slunk out in the form of a dog. And, when a frustrated demon would have avenged himself on the exorcising monk by entering the dormitory that night in the form of a crow, and was about to slip into his sleeping victim's mouth, then the latter awoke, called instinctively upon his patron, and had not even finished the first syllable of *Benedict!* before the demon was already out at the window again.

O, how dear and beloved to God was this Saint, not only whose name, but the least jot or tittle of whose name, even as a fiery arrow of the Almighty let loose from the bow of his meritorious deeds, pursueth our Ancient Enemy even unto eternal destruction!

Nor was the monk less secure financially than spiritually. He had the necessary resources for bribery in the lawcourts; Abbot Boso was naïvely disgusted when, having sent a judge "two silver cups of no despicable weight," he found that this official "was already corrupted by his adversary's bribe"<sup>1</sup>. Guibert, who triumphed in an important suit, tells us frankly, "God knows it was not through the elegance of my oratory, but the hope of money: . . . for I and my fellow-abbot had brought twenty pounds each [for the cardinals]." In most monasteries, the very considerable revenues were at the disposal of a surprisingly small community of monks, who naturally treated their own maintenance as the first charge upon the estate<sup>2</sup>. They enjoyed

<sup>1</sup> p. 55: cf. P.L. vol. 156, col. 914 and *Chron. de Melsa*, R.S. III, 85, 135, 141, 182, 187.

<sup>2</sup> There is perhaps no matter in which the casual visitor to a monastery is likely to go further astray than in guessing at the number of its past inmates. Cobbett, in his *Rural Rides*, surmises from the buildings of Ely that

good "pittances," or extras for dinner and supper; flesh-eating had become so common that it was often looked upon as legalized by immemorial custom; quite apart from that ingenious interpretation of the Rule which admitted poultry, "because they are of the same creation as fish"<sup>1</sup>. Whenever a pious donor founded an "anniversary" of extra dishes for the monks and extra doles to the poor, the monks' share will almost always be found to be the larger of the two, and often considerably larger. There is practically no trace of the labour prescribed by St Benedict in any of these five monasteries; indeed, the emphasis which Ordericus lays on labour under the new reforms of Cîteaux, Tiron, etc. implies that this was one of their main distinctions (639 b, d; 643 a); notices in the *Annales* also imply that labour was exceptional. On the other hand, the Fleury chronicler treats it as quite natural that a monk should be out fowling by night (p. 230). The monks had already begun to use their "granges," or outlying estates, as holiday-resorts for periodical "recreationes"<sup>2</sup>. In spite of Abbé Rocher's pathetic anxiety to claim all the building, writing, teaching, etc. as the direct work of the monks, his documents distinctly imply the contrary. They had their school for young monks, of course; but of outside pupils there is scarcely a trace, except for that legend of Abbo's 500 pupils which Abbé Rocher himself dismisses as incredible<sup>3</sup>. There is no hint that the bell-founder and the two architects mentioned on pp. 111, 113 and 120 of the *Miracles* were monks; on p. 319 we find a monk superintending the workmen, but only as financier; on p. 327 it is distinctly implied that the builders were all layfolk. On p. 340, the chronicler complains of the small amount of writing that had been done. Monks of a real literary turn often suffered much from the envy of their fellows; this complaint comes with remarkable unanimity from Guibert (870 c), Orderic (449 c), Glaber (660 c), both Ekkehard

it must have harboured a multitude of monks in the Middle Ages; yet its extreme complement was only 70; in the twelfth century we find only 40; the numbers seldom rose to 50 again; and in 1532 there were 37 and at the Dissolution, apparently, only 25. Probably the 37 included dependent priories, and the 25 did not.

<sup>1</sup> Ekkehard, 50 b; the allusion is to Genesis i, 20-21, which seems to imply that fish and fowl alike were created from the watery element. For pittances and flesh see *ibid.* 13 a, 14 a, 33; 43 b, 48 b, 54 a.

<sup>2</sup> *Miracles*, p. 217; cf. P.L. vol. 142, col. 922 b (St-Denis).

<sup>3</sup> p. 150.

(11, 6 and 247 a), Aimoin (*Miracles*, p. 171) and Rupert of Deutz (*Annales*, p. 553). Glaber, again, complained that none in his day troubled to chronicle noteworthy events for posterity (613 a). Guibert tells us how, when a weighty matter had to be discussed in Latin before the Pope, some of the priests "scarce knew the elements of that language"; and, when the Pope turned to the two senior abbots, they both urged Guibert, the youngest present, to speak for them (913 c).

The general impression, even from those picked monasteries, is that there was much need for reform. When Ordericus says that the Cistercians had made up their minds to keep the strict letter of the Benedictine Rule, "as the Jews did with the Mosaic Law," he is admitting that these alone, among all St Benedict's sons, bore actually, if too ostentatiously, that full burden. The Rule dated now from more than five centuries ago; most monks took already the Chaucerian view; it was "old and som del streit," and the new world's business was to follow newer ways. The average monk kept enough of it to raise him definitely above the average society of his time; but some very important clauses were treated practically as obsolete. Ordericus, and Guibert when his youth was past, evidently lived lives of real self-denial, and had some right to contemplate the contrast which Guibert draws between monastic mortifications and knightly self-indulgence (767 d). Glaber, though he confesses himself "gey ill to live wi'," and could boast little obedience to the Benedictine principle of stability of place (686 d), seems to have settled down into a respectable and beneficent member of society; and he gives us an admirable account of a fellow-Cluniac, the reforming abbot St William of Dijon. But to the old conservative abbey of St-Gall even the milder Cluniac reform was odious; and the monks' struggle with the reformers, as told by themselves, forms one of the most curious and instructive pages in monastic history<sup>1</sup>. Guibert and Glaber, in casual but significant passages, imply that laxity was the rule rather than the exception; to Ordericus, charity was growing cold, and iniquity abounded, and the day of Antichrist was at hand<sup>2</sup>. As a good member of a great

<sup>1</sup> Ekkehard, pp. 57-64: the significance of this whole story is well brought out by Meyer v. Knonau in the introduction to his translation.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 156, cols. 880, 898; vol. 142, cols. 635-7; vol. 188, cols. 375, 644.

monastery which had always enjoyed a good name, he naturally thought these new Orders—Cîteaux, Tiron, etc.—pharisaical. He appealed to the memory of “our predecessors and Fathers of approved fame,” who had not been so meticulous. If all monasteries had been like St-Évroul, there would have been much justice in his criticism; such great orderly abbeys as that, few and far between, might well have gone on after their then fashion; but it was the multitude of smaller houses that the reformers called to repentance. The task had already been tried piecemeal before the wholesale reforms of Cîteaux and Prémontré and Tiron. One of the most striking things in Mabillon’s *Annales* is the number of monasteries there recorded as needing reform—either materially or morally or, most frequently, from both sides at once. Yet even Mabillon’s records are far from exhaustive; the student constantly stumbles across the traces of some monastery which dropped out altogether even in these early times, no man has recorded when or how; we only know that once it was, and at a later date it is not. It must be remembered, also, that in the nature of the case our surviving records come most frequently from the larger monasteries, where the Rule was generally better kept than in the smaller cells; that is a generalization frequently emphasized by medieval disciplinarians. Therefore we may safely infer that, besides those cases which have found their way into Mabillon’s *Annales*, there were many other instances of decay which have passed unrecorded. The notices become more frequent as the eleventh century wears on, and as chronicles and other ecclesiastical documents become fuller. We find that, in 1076, the possessions of the great abbey of Lobbes were being wasted by the abbot and the administrator (103). In 1077, at the still greater house of St-Bénigne-de-Dijon, “religion was languishing, the abbey oppressed with debt, the church stripped of its ornaments, and the buildings half-ruined” (109). In 1078, “Bernard count of Besalu subjected to Cluny certain monasteries which had turned aside from the right path [three are named] in order that they should be ordered according to the Benedictine Rule” (121); in the same year, the abbey of St-Vit was purged by the bishop, and its abbot removed (126); at “Mediolacus” the possessions were wasted by the abbot, and at Lorsch by two abbots in succession

(128). In 1079, the abbot of Montmajour was denounced by the count of Arles to the Pope as "a man of flagitious life," and the abbey goods were being wasted (141); at Korbei, one of the great abbeys of Europe, the abbot Frederic ruled three years "to the disaster and ruin of the monastery; a man of no devotion, a trickster and a prince of vanities" (142). In 1080,

the monastery of Brantôme had so fallen away from its earlier religious observance that it was reduced almost to nought; wherefore Elias count of Périgord, in whose power it was, committed it that year to Séguin abbot of Chaise-Dieu for reformation. The deed runs as follows "I Elias, count of Périgord, fearing the pains of hell, and choosing rather to be associated with God's elect, seeing that the monastery . . . which is called Brantôme is now living most irregularly—*minime regulariter*—by my negligence, and hath been brought almost to nought by the abuse of such as dwell there, have feared to keep it in my power and to lend countenance to the monks' misdoings—*vitiis*—Therefore, etc. etc." (151).

It would be tedious to go through the rest of the volume in detail; but I append a list of the pages on which similar notices will be found<sup>1</sup>. The nunnery of St-Éloi near Paris, in 1107, "had fallen into such corruption that these girls devoted to God seemed to have cast off all shame"; the pope, advising the king "how he might remove the scandal," determined to eject the nuns and put monks in their stead (475). Lambert of Hersfeld describes the introduction of Cluniac monks into parts of Germany "because the holy and angelical profession of monachism had come in those parts to such evil repute and such corruption, that monks were esteemed not according to their innocence and integrity of life, but because of the money they possessed" (43). And the *Annales* show very clearly, in detail, how much the monks' frequent lawsuits must have contributed to the dilapidation of their revenues<sup>2</sup>. Even more numerous are the cases where they themselves complain of injustice at the hands of

<sup>1</sup> pp. 155, 165, 173, 174, 176, 179, 185 (3 cases), 196, 210, 214, 220 (2 cases), 225, 230, 232, 238, 241, 245, 251, 257, 268, 289, 315 (and appendix), 317, 334, 354, 359, 363, 367, 382, 392, 404 (3), 405, 418 (2), 426, 439, 445, 462, 463, 475, 479, 482, 483, 490, 494, 501, 507, 509, 562, 571, 588.

<sup>2</sup> *E.g.* pp. 75, 138 ff., 254, 256, 337, 339, 343 (2 cases), 344, 349 (2 cases), 357, 373, 386.



princes or nobles, whom their wealth tempted to acts of spoliation<sup>1</sup>.

I deal more fully in later chapters with the express and deliberate verdict of contemporaries as to the extent and the causes of monastic decay: here I am mainly concerned with the casual and undesigned evidence of chroniclers who are mainly intent upon other things. And, among such undesigned testimonies, perhaps the strongest are those which show the frequent impunity of crime and the actual danger of meddling with the monastic criminal<sup>2</sup>. Abbot Butler, in his defence of ordinary conservative Benedictinism, shows startling ignorance of the actual evidence; he writes as though we knew nothing of the older monks except through the biased criticisms of over-zealous reformers<sup>3</sup>. But there is one trait, common to all these reforms, which cannot be explained away on this theory of hypercritical bias: those monks or nuns who strove for a return to the actual Rule were constantly persecuted by the relaxed majority; we shall see this when we come to the Cistercian records. And, long before the days when these general reforming movements had created an open party-cleavage, we have frequent evidence for the danger of keeping the Rule strictly oneself, or of striving for its strict observance in the community. The monk who told the truth at a visitation was likely to suffer for it<sup>4</sup>. St Abbo, perhaps the greatest man whom Fleury produced, was murdered

<sup>1</sup> Compare Guibert's complaints of the changed attitude towards monasteries (P.L. vol. 156, col. 898). I deal elsewhere with the modern contention that monastic wealth did not breed corruption.

<sup>2</sup> There are many interesting stories of monastic criminals in Guibert; but it is usually the hand of providence which brings them to justice. The St-Gall chroniclers show how long irregularities could thrive with impunity: pp. 67 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *L.c.* p. 359. "While not for a moment questioning the reality and the value of all the numerous revivals and reforms that are so striking a feature of Benedictine history, we must yet bear in mind that it is a natural trick of panegyrists of reforms and reformers to depict in colours much too black the general state of things when the hero appeared on the scene. Paul Sabatier's introductory chapter to the Life of St Francis is an example of this." On the contrary, there is much damning contemporary evidence of primary importance which M. Sabatier omits from that very chapter, notably the dispassionate business-diary of Odo Rigaldi, with which I have to deal in my second volume. It is astounding that a Benedictine of Abbot Butler's distinction should be so ignorant of the actual evidence of medieval writers, and so content to see everything through the spectacles of modern apologists.

<sup>4</sup> For St-Gall see p. 68; St-Riquier in *Annales*, p. 87. See also my 2nd vol.

by monks whom he strove to reform<sup>1</sup>; St Aigulfus, the ever-memorable discoverer of St Benedict's bones, became abbot of the great monastery of Lérins and was there murdered by froward subjects; Maurilius, a distinguished abbot of Fécamp, "had been abbot of a monastery at Florence, where his rigorous discipline made him hateful to transgressors, and he found poison in the drink set before him," even as St Benedict had found it. About the same time William, bishop of Limoges, who had been prior of St-Martial, was poisoned by those who resented his reforms. Next year a Suabian abbot was murdered by one of his monks. Hugh, abbot of St-Martin, tried to reform his house; he survived an axe stroke on the head but succumbed to poison in 1098. Manegold, abbot of St Georgen in the Black Forest, "was killed by a wicked monk" in 1100. About that same year, at one of the monasteries dependent on St-Bertin's, the abbot "suffered much from his froward monks." Erluin, abbot of Lobbes, tried to purge his house by expelling the most incorrigible; three of them set upon him, cut off his tongue and put out his eyes<sup>2</sup>. When St Bernard of Tiron preached against clerical concubinage, the priests tried to kill him (P.L. vol. 172, col. 1397). Erminold, abbot of Prufingen, was murdered in 1121

<sup>1</sup> Abbo's story is told in H. C. Lea, *Sacerdotal Celibacy*, 3rd ed. i, 176; Aigulfus, AA.SS.O.S.B. II (1669), 659 ff.; Maurilius in Ordericus, col. 405 a; the others in *Annales*, pp. 338, 348, 373, 385, 399, 404 and Hauck, *Kirchen-gesch. Deutschlands*, III, 344.

<sup>2</sup> Such incidents meet us all through monastic history; their evidence is corroborated by the generalizations of contemporaries, from which it may suffice to quote three instances here. Clement V, at the Council of Vienne (1311), had published a decree grounded on the fact that "some monks (as we have been informed) having cast off the sweet yoke of regular observance, sometimes leave their own monasteries, under the feint that they cannot safely dwell therein or under some other colourable pretext, and wander about from court to court of great men; and, unless their Superiors grant them the pension or subvention which they demand, these men conspire against them, accuse them of treason or other grievous crimes, and procure the capture and imprisonment of these Superiors, and the burning of their monasteries" (*Clement*, lib. III, tit. x, c. 1). Bromyard, two generations later, instances "visitations" among other cases where men often fear to tell the truth "lest they be beaten or slain" (*Sum. Praed.* v, i, § 9). In 1529, the Provincial Council of Canterbury met at St Paul's and passed, *inter alia*, a decree for the merciful reception of all repentant monastic apostates who besought readmission; "with the exception, however, of such as the diocesan may judge, from strong [*vehementibus*] signs or tokens, to have formerly conspired, or to be likely to conspire in future, for the murder of the abbots, priors, or brethren of their monasteries, or in any other way to have compassed their death" (*Wilkins*, *Conc.* III, 723 b).

for his attempts to keep the discipline of the Rule; murder was plotted for the same reason against St Annobert of Séez; a froward lay-brother slew Dietrich of Zeitz before the altar in 1123. Later, two Württemberg abbots were murdered by their monks (Cless, vol. II, i, p. 460); at another house, the visitors did not dare to exercise their office (*ibid.* 475). Similar dangers or deaths are recorded by Wadding (an. 1304 § 2, 1305 § 4, 1313 § 1). A great abbot like Geoffrey of Vendôme, instead of commanding his dependent priories to obedience on such fundamental points as promiscuous flesh-eating and familiarities with women, was reduced to pleading with them. And in many cases we find what became one of the most significant symptoms of the generations preceding the Reformation—that monks cannot be reformed by ordinary ecclesiastical authority, but the secular arm must be invoked to meet force (if only the force of inert resistance) with superior physical force<sup>1</sup>. This state interference, so bitterly resented by some modern writers, began at least as early as Charles the Great, and was frequent in the period with which we are now dealing. The Cistercian-Franciscan group of reforms, on the other hand, owed very little to such interference. But, in those of the fourteenth century, the arm of the state became even more prominent than before: St Teresa, in the sixteenth, testifies to its extreme value in seconding her efforts<sup>2</sup>, and it was the secular arm which made possible the reforms of Richelieu and Joseph II. Therefore our Henry VIII (apart from his indefensible methods, to which we shall come later on) was in excellent company when he insisted on interfering, in spite of the clerical claims of immunity. For even the best of churchmen were often willing to let the disease go very far indeed before they tolerated this last and most radical remedy. How much the medieval prelate was willing thus to endure may be inferred from Abbot Lambert's speech to the monks of St-Vaast at Arras, whom he reformed in 1109, with the help of the count of Flanders.

He set before them the example of the ass which spake and rebuked the madness of the prophet, signifying by this prophet the monks, who ought to be lettered folk; and, by the brute beast, this count who had come to rebuke them.

<sup>1</sup> *Annales*, v, 43-4, 150, 404, 507; vi, 75, 95, 106.

<sup>2</sup> *Ceuvres de Ste-Thérèse*, ed. Migne, 1863, II, 146, 154, 174.

When even the most orthodox monastic reformers were left to the tender mercies of their own brethren, we have such frequent evidence of their persecution that the pleas of certain modern apologists would drive us into a very serious dilemma. If the reforms needed were indeed so slight and superficial as we are sometimes told, we should be forced to the conclusion that some of the greatest medieval saints were tactless busybodies, who earned much unpopularity by grossly exaggerating the faults of their contemporaries. But the phenomenon is too frequent to be thus explained away: St Teresa, at a time when Spaniards piqued themselves on their faith, speaks as bitterly against the persecuting methods of the relaxed majorities as any of her brother or sister saints in the Middle Ages<sup>1</sup>. All that we know from other sources is in complete harmony with these reformers' claims, that nobody wanted to introduce novelties, but simply to enforce the immemorial code to which every Religious at his profession swore life-long obedience. St Bernard might have said exactly as Colet said four centuries later: "The way whereby the church may be reformed into better fashion is not to make new laws... It is no need that new laws and constitutions be made, but that those that are made already be kept"<sup>2</sup>.

We have said that this necessity of state interference, so often misrepresented in modern times as a Reformation abuse, was at least as old as Charlemagne's time; so also was that element of monasticism which, by common consent, bred terrible corruption in the institution—the *commendam* system. Abbeys were given to non-resident abbots, even several abbeys to a single abbot, or an abbey to a bishop; the great Alcuin was a pluralist of this kind. These prelates in *commendam* were tempted to think only of their revenues and neglect their absent monks,

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* II, 135, 152-3, 177, 275, 316, 327, 338, 344-5, 350. There are many other passages in which she complains of special persecutions directed against herself: especially in connexion with her co-reformer Father Gratian, about whom and Teresa the unreformed Carmelites spread the most odious reports. To these notes of my own, made some years ago, may be added a sentence of hers quoted by a reviewer in *The Times Lit. Sup.* for Ap. 29, 1920, p. 269, "that no early Christian was ever more cruelly handled by Pagan persecutors than those Religious, whether men or women, who desired to live according to the laws of the founder, were by their relaxed brethren and sisters."

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Lupton, *Life of John Colet*, p. 299. The Cistercian fathers by whom the *Articuli Parisienses* for the reform of their Order were drawn up in 1493 pointed out equally plainly that there was no need of new laws, but simply of some sort of loyalty to the old regulations. (*Nomast. Cist.* p. 550.)

to whom, all the while, they were setting an example of Rule-breaking. It began very early; it was already common in Germany in 1105, as we may see from a most significant example quoted by Mabillon (*Annales*, VI, 452). Into England, it crept only just before the Reformation; but England was very exceptional.

Lastly, the canons of church councils between 1000 and 1150 contain frequent implications of serious monastic decay—apostasy, simony, widespread neglect of the Rule, etc. etc.<sup>1</sup> In the face of the indirect evidence alone, it would be paradoxical to deny that the great reforms of 1020–1120 were prompted by the serious and widespread shortcomings men saw around them.

Therefore, if we survey all this evidence in all its bearings; if we pass on from the picturesque and easy chronicles of a few model monasteries to the scattered indications, almost bewildering in their variety even at this early date, of life at the average smaller houses; if, in short, we piece together the full facts, and try to fit them into one connected whole, as Mabillon would fain have done if his superiors had not deliberately rendered his task impossible<sup>2</sup>, then we shall conclude that the Odyssey of Abbot Herluin of Bec was, as his biographer implies, just a normal experience. The greatness of Lanfranc and Anselm has helped Herluin to the immortality which he deserves; he was indeed one of the few who never cease to seek until they have found<sup>3</sup>. The vicissitudes of that search are thus told by his biographer, Gilbert Crispin, who became abbot of Westminster. Herluin had been a knight; he wished now to fight a still harder fight as a monk; but

the devil again found new devices against him, and took two occasions of almost dissuading him from that highest step in human life that he had set his heart upon, to wit, the summit of monastic

<sup>1</sup> Here is a summary list from C. L. Richard's *Analysis Conciliorum*, 1778, II. Councils of Limoges, 1028–31; Bourges, 1031 § 24; *Coyacense*, 1050 §§ 1, 2; Lisieux, 1055; Toulouse, 1056 § 6; Compostella, 1056 §§ 2, 4; Rome, 1059 § 7; Vienne and Tours, 1060; Rouen, 1074 § 2, 6, 7, 9; London, 1075 § 2; Winchester, 1076 § 8, also pt II, § 12; Melfi, 1089 §§ 7, 10; London, 1102 §§ 12, 18; Toulouse, 1119 § 10; Palencia, 1129 §§ 7, 8; Clermont, 1130 § 5; Lateran, 1139 §§ 7, 9, 27 (cf. Lateran, 1179 § 11); Reims, 1148 § 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Mélanges Mabillon*, pp. 101 ff., quoted in a note to my introduction.

<sup>3</sup> See the earlier pages of R. W. Church's *St Anselm*. Of all writers who were not specialists in monastic history, none has given a better picture of the monastic spirit at its best than Church.

life. He went to a certain monastery to enquire concerning the life of the monks; and, after kneeling in prayer, he went with reverence and great fear to the cloister-gate as to the portal of paradise, as one most anxious to learn what were a monk's dress, and manners, and religious session in cloister. He saw that all the brethren were far removed from that gravity of manners which their Order demands; whereat he was troubled, and altogether uncertain which mode of life to choose. Moreover, the porter of that house, seeing him thus coming within the precincts, suspected him for a thief; wherefore he smote him upon the neck with his fist and with all his might, and, seizing him by the hair, thrust him forth from the gate. Yet did Herluin, of his exceeding patience, answer no hasty word for the injustice thus done upon him, remembering that he was a layman and the other a monk. He feared greatly to come nearer to such men as these; yet that vine-shoot which had been planted by Him who is the True Vine could be withered by no heat of adversity, being deeply rooted in His charity, which suffereth all things.

Bearing in mind this edifying word of God, he made another attempt of the same kind. On the Christmas Day next following, he went to a monastery of greater fame, where the brethren went out in glad procession upon that solemn feast. There he saw the monks, with indecorous benevolence, laughing promiscuously with lay folk, rejoicing in their most elaborate ornaments, showing them to others, and pressing before each other with contentious tumult into the [church] door. Moreover, one of the monks, when another pressed too much upon him, smote him with his fist, turned him violently away, and cast him down so rudely that he bit the earth with his teeth; for, as hath been said, the manners of all men in Normandy were yet barbarous. But, lest his good purpose should be ruined by this act of indiscipline, when he saw such levity of act and such wicked manners in the men by whose example he was unwilling to rule his life, God's hand came and upheld his tottering mind. That night, after the service of matins, long before dawn, the rest went forth [from the church], while he remained to pray in a hidden corner; whereupon a certain monk, unaware of his presence, came and prayed hard by; who, now falling prostrate upon the earth, and now kneeling on bended knee, remained thus until full dawn, in tearful prayer; wherefore, by his example, Herluin was altogether set up again<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> P. L. vol. 150, col. 701. A little earlier, a saintly devotee named Adhegrinus sought equally long, with his friends, for a decent monastery: "There was not a place in France [*i.e.* in the narrower geographical sense], wherever they heard of any monastery, to which he had not either gone himself or sent his explorers; yet they found among these no place of Religion wherein they could rest" until they came to Baume in Burgundy (*Vita Odonis*, 1, 22; P. L. vol. 133, col. 53).

## CHAPTER XVII

### WHAT CONTEMPORARIES THOUGHT

LET us now pass to the evidence of other witnesses; an evidence more direct, though hardly more cogent, than what may be inferred from the foregoing scattered, indirect and undesigned notices. Let us see what was the considered verdict of the serious public upon monachism in general, at a time when the monk was one of the greatest landowners in every country of Europe, and one of the strongest social forces, and before the Cistercian reform had taken full effect.

If the monastic moralists of this period are more reticent than their successors as to the transgressions of their brethren, we must remember that this is the great century of struggle over the question of clerical celibacy, and that even the frankest critic might hesitate before exposing the naked facts to a not always sympathetic public. But, even thus, the explicit evidence of monastic moralists is such as, on any less contentious subject, would be taken as decisive<sup>1</sup>.

So far as I know, the first distinguished writer who gives us a full and considered characterization of the monasticism of his own day is St Odo of Cluny, who died in 942. His *Collationes* are addressed to a bishop, and deal with the clergy in general. Not only, however, does he not exclude his fellow-monks from his general judgement, but, explicitly or implicitly, he sometimes lets us know that he is thinking specially of them (*e.g.* cols. 554, 565 d; 568 a; 574 d; 583 a; 586 b). To take the cowl (he says, after Jerome) is a second baptism, washing away all sin for the nonce; but increasing wealth has brought decay; full bellies are prone to worse fleshly lusts (554, 564, 567). The vow of chastity is only too commonly broken (559, 561, 568; cf. 562,

<sup>1</sup> If this and similar catenas should give the impression that, out of a mass of evidence of all kinds, only the unfavourable has been chosen, let me mention here that I am not aware of any medieval writer who ventures to give to monasticism in his day, as a whole, any favourable testimony which can be even remotely compared in explicitness with these unfavourable verdicts. As will be seen later, the silence of medieval monastic defenders on certain crucial points is almost more significant than the frankness of monastic critics.

570, 601). The institution, in general, is in decay, amid the general decay of contemporary religion.

Must we not justly mourn that Christianity<sup>1</sup>, which ought to have grown stronger with all its advance in age, is on the contrary so bent aside from the right way, that all observance thereof seemeth to have failed; for we are all hastening headlong to evil (564).

As to the monasteries, he quotes the dream of Pachomius (582), to whom Satan came in the guise of a beautiful woman, and said

All things from their beginning tend to increase, and then to their fall. So therefore, as I divine, will it be in your profession also. For it hath grown up among its own faults, strengthened with signs and various virtues [*or, miracles*]; but, when it shall begin to grow old, then shall it dwindle, whether relaxed by the long lapse of time, or falling away from its own increase through lukewarm neglect. Then shall I be able to prevail against monks of this sort.

"Which" (comments Odo) "our unbridled wickedness showeth to be fulfilled in fact"<sup>2</sup>. Pachomius, he goes on to say, was afterwards taught by God "that monasteries should indeed be spread abroad in manifold wise, and some [*nonnulli*] should live piously and chastely, but very many [*plurimi*] should neglect, and should altogether lose their salvation."

<sup>1</sup> It would be a waste of time to argue against Mr Hilaire Belloc in the field of medieval history, were it not that his extreme confidence of assertion and pertinacity of iteration impress the public with a sense that a Roman Catholic champion must know something about his own subject, and that he must have some sort of documentary evidence behind his words. Yet, in fact, he is never weaker than when he deals most dogmatically in exclusive negations about a period from which nearly all his impressions are evidently formed at second-hand. He writes, on p. 69 of his *Europe and the Faith* (1920): "The conception which the Catholic Church had of *itself* in the early third century can, perhaps, best be approached by pointing out that if we use the word 'Christianity' we are unhistorical. 'Christianity' is a term in the mouth and upon the pen of the post-Reformation writer; it connotes an opinion or a theory; a point of view; an idea. The Christians of the time of which I speak had no such conception." In the particular passage in my text, and also on col. 586, it is possible that *Christianitas* may be used in its not uncommon medieval sense of *Christendom*; but already in Ambrose and Augustine it bears its modern sense of *Christianity*; and so little is it a post-Reformation word that Ducange, after giving a series of medieval examples, adds *et aliis scriptoribus passim*. *Christianismus* again, which Mr Belloc goes on to condemn as a word still more impossible to early churchmen ("Indeed, no one has been so ignorant or so unhistorical as to attempt those phrases," p. 70) occurs repeatedly in one of the earliest of all, Tertullian. A reference of five minutes to the new *Thesaurus* would have shown Mr Belloc how frequently both words are used by the Fathers.

<sup>2</sup> "Quod ita fieri nostra satis effrenata pravitas ostendit." The medieval *satis* is constantly used not to soften, but to intensify the adjective, like its equivalent in Italian, *assai*.



Odo says again (568):

Some do so set to nought the Virgin's Son, that they commit fornication in His very courts; nay, in those very inns<sup>1</sup> which the devotion of the faithful hath built in order that chastity may be kept more safely within their fenced precincts, they do so overflow with lust that Mary hath no room wherein to lay the child Jesus.

And again (559):

Thou shalt scarce find one who escapeth from the shipwreck of his modesty. . . Yet, if [the repentant sinner] should consider that Christ [by His miracles of Mark viii, 23 and John v, 13] signifieth His will that a man should flee from the crowd of vicious men and their abominable accomplices as though he fled with Lot from Sodom, and if he should seek to go apart to some other place where perchance the freedom of sin might be somewhat refrained—then, I say, forthwith all the rest, like vassals of Satan, gainsay such a man, and call him a deserter of his own house<sup>2</sup>, albeit they praise him with one voice if he desire to go thence in search of some worldly honour, and they help such an one with exhortation or even with substantial gifts, esteeming him no deserter, but one who provideth for his [or their?] humility<sup>3</sup>.

The mystery of iniquity is already with us, since "every order of Religion or Christianity is changed from what it was" (586).

All who exercise worldly arts, of any sort whatsoever, practise these as they have learned them from their masters, and use the tools that befit the work whereunto they are devoted; thus do boatmen, shoemakers or carpenters. We monks, alone, cast away those instruments of good works which St Benedict made for the achievement of life in heaven, and wander to right or to left, and deign not to use the instruments of good works handed down by our masters (603; cf. 607).

The sinners hold closely together; it is almost impossible to reach them with the punishments that they deserve; thus impunity begets fresh sins, and progression in vice is inevitable (601).

We are become a laughing-stock both to angels and to men (619). What will these men say at the Day of Doom, or how will they appear, unto whom Religion hath been handed down, and in whose hands it hath come to ruin—*collapsa est*? Let they themselves look to their hidden deeds, whereof I am ashamed to speak (603).

<sup>1</sup> *Diversoriis*, applied metaphorically to monasteries; the reference is, of course, to Luke ii, 7, Vulg.

<sup>2</sup> We have seen how important a part the *stabilitas loci* played in Benedictine theory.

<sup>3</sup> He again emphasizes the persecutions endured at the hands of relaxed monks by those who strove to live more regularly on cols. 560 d; 600 d.

All this is very plain speech; but Odo feels that the policy of concealment and smooth words is now bankrupt (599).

Because scandal is a most dangerous thing, therefore good men do oftentimes love rather to hold their peace, than to scandalize the wicked by their speech. Yet not even in their silence are these men safe; for it is written: "If thou declare not to the wicked his wickedness, I will require his blood at thy hand." Wherefore we must consider that it is our duty to avoid the scandal of our neighbours in so far as this may be done without sin; but, if men take offence at the truth, it is more profitable to let offence come than to let the truth be abandoned;

for which he very truly pleads Christ's example. This last sentence Odo has borrowed from Gregory the Great; with that same maxim St Bernard fortified himself in his struggle for reform in the Church; and it became the motto of those orthodox monks who, in 1503, were striving to reform Benedictinism through the model congregation of Chezal-Benoît<sup>1</sup>.

Three unexceptionable witnesses, again, may be cited from about the year 1000. St Hugh of Cluny, in 1098, had a great struggle with his diocesan bishop; and, according to Mabillon, he attributed all this persecution to the calumny of his own monks, which plague is said to have so universally infected all the monasteries of those days, that there was scarcely any monk in them who merited his father's blessing.

About the same time, the cardinal-monk, St Peter Damian, Gregory VII's personal friend, fulminated against the general neglect of St Benedict's prescriptions for the renunciation of private property and the confinement of Religious within their monastic precincts.

Shame hath perished, honesty hath vanished, Religion is fallen, and the whole multitude of holy virtues hath as it were assembled in one flock and taken flight together. For all seek that which is their own, and, scorning the desire of heaven, gape insatiably after earthly things. He goes on to speak of their execrable demeanour and deeds in these last days of the world—*execrandae conversationis gesta sub ipso mundi fine*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For this great monastic reform of Chezal-Benoît, see the 11th of my *Medieval Studies*, where the greater part of their manifesto is translated.

<sup>2</sup> Mabillon, *Annales*, v, 371; P.L. vol. 145, cols. 252-63; compare the whole letter on col. 291.

Our third witness from these same years is the great Abailard, who only exposes in closer detail the very things which his contemporaries St Bernard and Peter the Venerable were attacking in more general terms. In a sermon preached before his own monks, he thus addressed them:

For now the fervour of religion is grown cold—nay, is almost extinguished—and we, who ought to live by the labour of our own hands (which alone, as St Benedict saith, maketh us truly monks) do now follow after idleness, that enemy of the soul, and seek our livelihood from the labours of other men. . . . So that, entangling ourselves in worldly business, and striving, under the sway of earthly covetousness, to be richer in the cloister than we had been in the world, we have subjected ourselves to earthly lords rather than to God. We take from the great men of this world, in the guise of alms, manors and tenants and bondmen and bondwomen; thus we bow to the heavy yoke of these [worldlings], and oftentimes pay much for little received. . . . Often also, to defend these possessions, we are compelled to outside courts and before worldly judges, before whom we contend so shamelessly that we compel our own men not only to swear for us, but even to fight for us in single combat, to the extreme peril of their lives. . . . Who doth not know that we exercise heavier exactions upon those subject unto us, and oppress them with more grievous tyranny, than worldly potentates?

He goes on to speak of their appropriation and consequent impoverishment of parish churches; their notorious quarrels; "almost all controversies are either between monks, or arising from monks"; their embezzlement of conventual endowments to feed their friends or relations; their constant gaddings abroad; their unscrupulous acceptance of stolen or ill-acquired moneys.

For who knoweth not how our Religion groweth vile through these [dishonest] folk, whose invitations we refuse not, and from whom we not only accept gifts but even mingle at their disorderly tables with their disorderly household?

The result is, that monastic good cheer is proverbial (p. 592).

Every lean fellow, when he reacheth this stewpond of the cloister, soon waxeth so fat and well-liking that, seeing him again after a brief while, thou shalt scarce know him for what he was. If thou bring but a few monks among a thousand layfolk, thou shalt find in that small company more fat and sleek folk, more heated with wine, and more bald heads than among the rest<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Opera*, ed. V. Cousin, 1849, I, 572 ff. I hope to reproduce almost the whole of this sermon in my volume of documents.

This, it is true, was anything but a model monastery; but Abailard repeatedly asserts the wide-spread extension of these defects; he constantly accuses his contemporaries in general. For the abbey itself at which this sermon was preached, we have his still more unflattering description in the first of his Letters—*Historia Calamitatum*, cap. xiii<sup>1</sup>. The monks of St-Denis, indignant with him for presuming to doubt that their founder and patron saint was that Dionysius the Areopagite of Acts xvii, 34, had banished him to the abbey of St-Gildas de Ruys in Brittany. He thus describes his position: "The land was barbarous, and its language unknown to me; and the foul and untamable life of those monks was known unto all men." A local lord had seized upon their ill-living as an excuse for taking most of their farms.

The monks lay hard upon me for their daily necessities, since they had no common fund from which I could help them, but each fed himself from his own purse—himself and his concubines with their sons and daughters. They rejoiced in my difficulties here, and they themselves stole and carried off whatsoever they could, in order that, failing in my administration, I might be compelled either to give up all discipline or to depart altogether.

The Cluniac reform, then, had an uphill fight against evil without and evil within; and that reform itself was already declining when the eleventh century drew to its close. The need was great again; moreover the world was far more awake than in 940, and St Anselm's contemporaries could not have been so easily satisfied as those of St Odo. It is from Cluny again that we may cite our next witness.

The *Consuetudines Vetustae Cluniacenses* were written about 1086 A.D., when Cluny had long passed through its apprenticeship; when it was in full maturity of influence, and already in the first stages of inward decay. It is no longer a struggling minority, mingling some natural jealousy with its righteous indignation against the laxity of older Benedictinism, but a vast institution with strong temptations to conservatism. These *Consuetudines* are a revised edition of an earlier Cluniac code which had immense influence in the monastic world, enduring from

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 27-8. Mabillon, it may be noted, accepts this description on Abailard's authority, without qualification. (*Annales*, vi, 142.)

generation to generation<sup>1</sup>; and they indicate plainly the evils which the Cluniacs sought to combat. Large numbers of recruits (complains the author) are thrust into the cloister because they would have been useless in the world; "such men are eggs of asps, which hatch into cockatrices"<sup>2</sup>. Even more strongly writes Peter the Venerable of Cluny, nearly two generations later. As head of the whole Cluniac Order, he issued to all his subordinates a decree that, with rare exceptions, there should thenceforth be no admission of novices at any house without his own or his successors' permission. This stringent rule, he explained, was necessitated by

the frequent and indiscreet reception of unprofitable persons throughout almost all the monasteries of our Order; by which indiscreet admission sometimes of peasants, or again of children or old men, or of fools or of men useless for work of any kind, things had at last come to such a pass that such persons almost outnumbered the rest, and unspeakable evils were frequently committed by them, whereof I speak no more here because they are shameful even to mention, but which came to our ears almost without intermission, from divers parts of the world.

In another of these statutes, he finds himself compelled to apologize for having recalled the brethren to some faint compliance with one of St Benedict's main prescriptions, that of labour:

We have ordained that the holy and ancient custom of manual work should be restored, at least to some degree, either within the monastic buildings or wheresoever it may be carried on decently, far from the gaze of secular folk. . . because idleness, which our Father St Benedict calleth the enemy of the soul, had gotten such an hold upon a great number of our inmates, and especially upon the so-called lay-brethren, that, both within and without the cloister (excepting a few who read and still fewer who wrote) they either slept against the walls of the cloister or wasted the whole day, almost from sunrise to sunset,—nay, almost unto midnight, when they might do it with impunity—in vain, idle, and, worse still, oftentimes in backbiting talk.

Plainly as he wrote thus about his own Order to those hundreds of officials who knew the disease, and who were pledged to help

<sup>1</sup> See Miss Rose Graham's valuable article in *Journ. Theol. Studies*, Jan. 1914, pp. 179 ff.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 149, col. 1035.

him with the remedy, he expressed himself still more emphatically with regard to Benedictine monachism in general. In a letter of about 1130, to the archbishop of Lyons, we find him writing:

The majority of monks in your province are of such as call themselves monks and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Strong in mutual support, they defy episcopal discipline; like the scales of Leviathan "one is joined to another, and not so much as any air can come between them"<sup>1</sup>.

Abbot Ailred of Rievaulx, a little later, generalizes in equally unflattering terms; dispensations from the Rule are so common "that in many monasteries men follow none of the precepts of this Rule; where then, I pray, can the substance of the monastic profession be found?"<sup>2</sup>

Nor did even the Cistercian revival stir to any depth the stagnant waters of Benedictinism in general. The *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense* was written by a monk who entered Clairvaux about 1180, and took his materials from immediate disciples of St Bernard. He writes:

How many there are who, though they profess chastity of body and holiness of spirit, yet fear not to follow the example of that wanton and wicked woman who eateth in secret, and wipeth her mouth, and saith "I have done no evil"<sup>3</sup>.

These specific complaints of contemporaries may be taken in connexion with the wide generalizations on this subject of monastic decay which may be found in Sackur's *Cluniacenser* and Hauck's *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*. The former writes (I, 22-8):

The [monastic] system of [agricultural] economy necessarily led to the break-down of the Rule; and, when once the principle [of claustration] was broken down, further dissolution became inevitable. In the end, every man did pretty well as he liked. . . Behind ostentatious altar-ornaments and sacred vessels lurked the frivolous and haughty spirit of a debased monasticism. Yet in these years [of the late tenth

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 189, cols. 1037, 186. Both documents should be read in full to realize their complete significance: see also his circular letter to the heads of Cluniac houses (lib. VI, ep. xv, col. 418).

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 195, col. 609.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 185 bis, col. 1015; cf. 1101. A long catena of similar confessions, growing in intensity to the Reformation, will form one subsection of the collection of original documents which I hope soon to publish.

century] every trace of monastic life had been destroyed... [Charles the Bald] had striven as best he could to raise the fallen discipline of the monks, and to revive destroyed or ruined abbeys; and in fact we may quote isolated examples of these activities. But a general reorganization of monasticism was beyond his power.

This picture is completed by the details which he collects in his first, second, third, fifth and eighth chapters from the separate reforms undertaken in different monasteries by the early abbots of Cluny.

Hauck's evidence deals with Germany alone; but German monasticism was not the least orderly in Europe. Hauck lays even more emphasis than Sackur upon the necessity for reform in the tenth and eleventh centuries (bk VI, ch. 6, vol. III, 1906, pp. 343 ff.). He writes:

We were not able to speak of literature and art without praising the monks; they were the first—not to say, the only—bearers of intellectual life [at this time]. Yet in spite of this, strange to say, monasticism as such had, for a long time, scarcely any influence worth speaking of upon the conditions of the German church.

Charles the Great, he points out, had tried to use the monks as civilizers of society in general; Louis the Pious on the other hand had tried to recall them to their ascetic ideal; the two movements were incompatible.

The more the monasteries became nurseries of civilization, the less did the monks represent the ascetic ideal. The latter denies the lawfulness of the former; the former hinders the realization of the latter; it is impossible to reconcile the two. In the great royal abbeys St Benedict's Rule was current; but the life in those houses was in open contradiction with the decrees of the Rule. Men knew this, but they looked upon the written law as limited by a customary law which had gradually grown up in deviation from the Rule<sup>1</sup>. It is undeniable that these conditions were dangerous to the continuance of monas-

<sup>1</sup> Hauck here quotes from the monk Arnold of St-Emmeram, who describes certain serious relaxations of this time "secundum consuetudines quae in monasteriis regalibus ad id temporis fuerant." The chroniclers of St-Gall show a naïve conviction that, so long as one followed custom, the letter of the Rule mattered little. There were great monasteries from which even the semblance of Benedictine life had almost disappeared; e.g. Canterbury Cathedral, on which Haddan and Stubbs comment in connexion with Abp. Wulfred's grant of 813 A.D. "It seems natural to conclude that the inmates of the monastery, all of whom are spoken of as clerks, now retained scarcely even the name of monks... The customs of monachism had apparently become extinct in this their original seat." (*Councils and Ecc. Docts.* III, 576.)

ticism. The conditions in France were still more dubious than in Germany. The general disorder of affairs there seemed to be leading monasticism to ruin. At the beginning of the tenth century the observance of the Rule had almost altogether ceased, until the reform of Cluny came.

In Lorraine, monastic decay was scarcely less than in Bavaria or France. The ravages of Normans and Huns, which reached these parts, were not the only, and scarcely even the main, cause. A still worse cause was that the monasteries, almost without exception, had lost their independence. They had come partly into the hands of laymen, partly of Bishops. There was not much difference here; for even in the latter case the monks found themselves robbed of the greater part of their possessions, which the Bishops gave to their vassals or relations. The impoverishment of the monasteries was the least of the evils here; far more dangerous was the relaxation of discipline which came from these circumstances. First, the precepts of the Rule were neglected; then they gradually drifted into total oblivion<sup>1</sup>. No small number of monasteries were invaded by almost incredible disorders. Richer's description of the monasteries in the Vosges is well known<sup>2</sup>; the revenues of Moyennoutier squandered, the monks undisciplined, preferring the tournament to the church, and finally practising theft and robbery as their profession. He is scarcely more complimentary to Senones; there, community of life had been abandoned, day and night were filled with drinking-bouts, revels and debauchery. This is scarcely overdrawn; for we have similar descriptions of other monasteries. At St Ghislain the clergy [who had succeeded the monks] lived in the cloister with their wives and children; the sacred relics were only there to entice from the laity gifts which were spent in revelling. At Lobbes the worst scenes were acted; when it was a question of recalling the monks to the observance of their Rule they ill-treated Erluin, who had been imposed upon them as Abbot<sup>3</sup>. He tried to clear the way by banishing those who resisted reform; whereupon three of these outcasts fell upon him, cut out his tongue and blinded him. Instances like these enable us to infer the depth of general degradation. Such conditions were insupportable in the long run. For the age had by no means forgotten the ideal of the *Vita Religiosa*; and it was precisely the need of the time which gave that ideal new power over men's minds.

<sup>1</sup> *Gest. Ep. Tull.* 31 (*MGH. Scriptt.* VIII, 639). "Regulam S. Benedicti huius regni [Lorraine] habitatoribus omnibus ignotam."

<sup>2</sup> Richer's *Gest. Eccl. Senon.*, *MGH. Scriptt.* xxv, 264, 278; *Mirac. S. Gisl.*, *ibid.* xv, 583; *Vita Gerardi*, *ibid.* pp. 665 ff.; *Gesta Abb. Lobb.*, *ibid.* iv, 68.

<sup>3</sup> The chronicler, it is true, represents Erluin himself as a despicable person; but he has no pity for his fate.



Hauck then goes on to describe the different movements for reform in Germany; but he adds a fact which, of itself, would prove the crying need for real reforms. When Archbishop Friedrich of Mainz struggled to bring back the Benedictines of his province to their Rule, "no small numbers left the cloister and cast the cowl away, to escape from compliance with his demands" (p. 375).

Under these circumstances, it was natural that many of the less patient should revolt from the church, and that even docile souls should despair. Dr Rashdall, commenting upon Renan<sup>1</sup>, has indicated the extent to which the intellectual side of the Renaissance and Reformation was already anticipated, in some quarters, before the end of the twelfth century. It is true we are as yet describing only the beginning of that century. When the first Cistercians went out into the wilderness, Abailard was scarcely born; and even Abailard does not yet belong to that university period when learning became popular, and when free-thought came flooding in with the Arab translations of Aristotle and the Arab commentators. Yet even in the early eleventh century there were already signs both of intellectual and of moral revolt. We read of irregular vocations; calls to lifelong penitence which seem to have ignored the monastic system. Guibert of Nogent tells us of a count who turned Jew, and implies that he had many companions who thought with him; Glaber cites an even more remarkable case; there were numerous heretics in the eleventh century whose doctrines were almost completely subversive of Christianity as it was then understood<sup>2</sup>. In contrast to this, another count, when the Lord's hand touched him, turned charcoal-burner and lived a life of solitary devotion before he could make up his mind to follow the beaten monastic path<sup>3</sup>. One of St Bernard's brothers, at a similar stage of conversion, lived as a peasant; so also did his mother. The *Chronicon Campense* tells us of a penitent German count who lived and died as a swineherd<sup>4</sup>. The biographer of St Bernard of Tiron recounts how, towards the end of the eleventh

<sup>1</sup> *Universities of Europe in the M.A.* I, 71.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 156, cols. 950-1; vol. 142, cols. 656-7, 643-4, 659, 672, cp. the survivals of paganism, 675.

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 156, col. 851.

<sup>4</sup> Eckertz, p. 334.

century, the confines of Brittany and Maine were full of solitary hermitages of this kind, ripe for a great revival<sup>1</sup>. What Peter the Venerable proclaimed to his fellow-monks was what the people had already discovered for themselves; monasticism in general was not what the public had a right to expect of it. All our evidence tends to show that there were very few houses in which the Rule was kept in anything like its original strictness. Yet society outside the monasteries was improving; the contrast thus became sharper and sharper. Everything was ripe for a sweeping movement of reform<sup>2</sup>.

This tide had begun to flow during the early eleventh century. The Camaldulensians were founded in 1020; the Vallombrosians in 1050; the Gramontines in 1073; the Carthusians in 1084; the order of Fontevraud in 1094; the Antonines in 1095; after these came the Cistercians and Premonstratensians (1098 and 1120 respectively). Early in the next century came the Franciscans and Dominicans, followed by the Austin Friars and Carmelites. Of these, a history on this scale need only notice two in any detail; the Cistercians in this volume and the Franciscans in the next. But neither Bernard nor Francis can be understood unless we bear in mind the breadth and depth of the general reforming movement of those two centuries; their force was not only individual, but collective and cumulative.

For these earlier monastic reforms lie at the very root of the Reformation, as the Reformation underlies the English and French Revolutions and the modern world. St Bernard's was the last great attempt to bring Benedictinism back to the original Rule. St Francis, in the thirteenth century, attempted to save monasticism by a frank repudiation of certain important Benedictine principles. But even this could not bring him into line with a growing world; and, when his and the Dominican reforms had spent themselves also, then a real revolution became inevitable. Creighton could scarcely have clung to the idea that the changes of the sixteenth century might have been brought about without any breach of Christian continuity, if he had known the

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 172, col. 1380.

<sup>2</sup> Other evidence which I omit here may be found in A. Dresdner's *Kultur- und Sittengeschichte der italienischen Geistlichkeit im 10 und 11 Jhdt.* (Breslau, 1890). See also the evidence which I print from the monastery of Reichenau in appendix 28.

documents of the twelfth century to the fourteenth as well as he knew those of the fifteenth and sixteenth. Centuries before the Reformation, some such revolution as that was predicted by orthodox churchmen.

In the century before St Bernard, the very revival of monasticism strengthened good men in their conviction that the time was now come for still more to be done, and yet more and more again, in order to bring the monks back to their Rule. The Cistercian movement was a revolt; and revolt generally comes not when things are at their worst, but when they have already begun to improve; when men have already tasted enough of progress to fight for a radical change. I have tried to depict, in the preceding chapter, a monasticism rich in possibilities, rich in the hope and faith and charity of a few, seldom sinking to the level of the barbarous society outside, yet seldom rising so far above that level as to satisfy thinking men, however it might impress the superstitious multitude. Many of the laity still bestowed freely on the monasteries for the good of their own souls; the growing orderliness of society gave the monks a securer tenure than in the past, and enabled them to exploit their possessions more steadily; their numbers increased greatly during the eleventh and twelfth centuries; but all this was not enough. Serious observers saw as clearly then, as now, that material prosperity, beyond a certain point, becomes a spiritual stumbling-block; and it would be difficult to find any great monk of the Middle Ages pleading for himself and his brethren what Dom Morin and Abbot Butler now plead on their behalf. The latter quotes with approval from the former:

As a general rule, history has proved that monastic communities have never been more fervent within, or more beneficent without, than when at the zenith of their power and riches. Every period of relaxation, on the contrary, coincides with a lessening of material resources, with wastefulness, and alienation of all kinds<sup>1</sup>.

The second sentence is of course true: the waste and speculation of relaxed monks was often enormous, as will be seen later. But the original monastic records—and none, perhaps, more plainly

<sup>1</sup> *Benedictine Monachism*, p. 158. It is true that Dom Butler suggests timid and indirect qualifications of this verdict; but the main impression he leaves is that of agreement.

than those of Dom Morin's own Belgium—show religious tepidity, or even worse, as the ordinary accompaniment of great wealth. It is true, those times were often marked by much magnificence of building, of ornament, and of ceremonial; but the missionary spirit of earlier monachism was as often conspicuously absent. St Bonaventura distinguishes quite clearly here between the mere outward formalities and the deeper realities which modern historians too often confuse. Writing in defence of his own Franciscan Order against its critics of the mid-thirteenth century, he had occasion to deal with the complaint: "We see that all religious Orders decay in religious life, even if they seem to be progressing in worldly wealth and in certain ceremonial matters." In his reply, he was compelled to admit that each fresh generation did relax something of its predecessor's strictness,

so that the elder generation becomes a laughingstock to the younger, instead of serving as an example. Nay, the younger deem themselves by so much better than their predecessors, because they fail to recognize the true virtues of perfect Religious; so that, while they maintain certain models of external discipline in choir, in the matter of processional ingress, and in other like matters, they dare to assert that the Order was never in so good a state [as it is now]<sup>1</sup>.

And he is here borne out by the quiet and cumulative testimony of the General Chapter Acts<sup>2</sup>. In 1260, under Bonaventura's own generalate, the Chapter solemnly forbade certain things as wasteful and extravagant—bell-towers, vaulted roofs, painted glass (except in the east window), silken or gold-embroidered vestments, silver crosses or censers. In 1292 these prohibitions have to be repeated and reinforced; moreover, golden censers and crosses are now prohibited. In 1316 we get another advance: it is necessary to forbid golden candlesticks. By 1400, the Franciscan church was often the largest in its town, and provided with such a lofty tower as still exists at King's Lynn or at Richmond in Yorkshire. Yet even Abbot Butler will not venture to contend that the Franciscans of those days were as "fervent within, and beneficent without," as in the days when Francis

<sup>1</sup> *Quaestiones circa Regulam*, no. xix.

<sup>2</sup> These have been published by Father Ehrle in vol. vi of A.L.K.G., in different volumes of A.F.H. and by Prof. A. G. Little in E.H.R. xiii (1898), 703.

and his first followers strictly forbade all ecclesiastical luxury<sup>1</sup>. Bonaventura's contemporary and fellow-cardinal, Hugues de St-Cher, is still more emphatic; and he, moreover, speaks of Religious of all Orders. In his commentary on Isaiah xxxv, 8, 9, he writes:

*And it shall be called the holy way; that is, without a multitude of lands and earthly possessions in monasteries. The unclean shall not pass over it; that is, the devil in his unclean pride and envy and manslaughter and lies shall not go through a monastery thus cleansed from earthly possessions, but he goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. . . No lion shall be there, nor any mischievous beast go up by it, nor be found there. . .* In the monastery, especially, there ought to be no lion of boastfulness or arrogance of vainglory, nor any mischievous beast of detraction, envy, hatred, lechery or avarice should go up by it, that is overcome it by the fulfilment of [evil] deed, or ever be found therein through evil thought. Yet nowadays all these things are found in the churches and monasteries, because Religion hath left holiness, and heaped together an abundance of earthly things<sup>2</sup>.

In another place (Isaiah xxxii, 18) he quotes Jeremiah ii, 14: *Is Israel a bondman?* and comments:

That is, the Religious, whom I [the Lord] had freed from bondage to worldly powers and from the fear of armies and even from the exaction of tributes? Without doubt Religion hath become a bondman, in that she hath returned to her vomit, and to other things which she had renounced and left, heaping up goods more anxiously than before, and more anxiously than any worldly folk. . . Moreover there are now few Religious who *sit in the tabernacles of confidence*; for they are afraid at the sound of a flying leaf, lest they should lose their

<sup>1</sup> The distinction comes out almost as plainly in Odo of Cluny, three centuries earlier (*Collationes*, II, §§ 7, 34; P.L. vol. 133, cols. 554, 579). "Those who, after professing Religion, backslide into carnal iniquities, are first caught by pride. . . which creeps upon them mostly in this fashion that, while they wax fat upon the revenues of the Church or the gifts of the faithful, they kick; and, being free from man's need of labour, they wax proud; then, having their hands full, they fall into the fault of Dives in the parable, feasting luxuriously and desiring to flaunt richer garments. Then also, forgetting their profession, they give themselves up to lechery. . . Some, given over to the pursuit of vanity, delight in celebrating the sacred mystery [of the Eucharist] with vestments of gold or curious workmanship, and with vases of precious metals. These would indeed do well, if they adorned their own hearts equally in God's eyes," and he goes on to contrast them with earlier saints who had been content with the humblest altar-vessels.

<sup>2</sup> IV, 77 a.

possessions; for in our days their feathers are plucked by all their neighbours. Wherefore Jeremiah saith (ii, 14): *Why is he become a prey?* Because he is become a Religious, running hither and thither from the forest of the hunters of this world to worldly gains and markets. But though many Religious—nay, almost all—are in opulence nowadays, yet few are at rest by reason of their distracting lawsuits and conventual dissensions and appeals of monk against monk.

It will do them good, he says presently, to lose much of their wealth;

this pompous Religion shall be reduced to great usefulness, so that monks shall sometimes be compelled to beg their kinsfolk for food and raiment, to disperse their communities, to pawn their crosiers and crosses and chalices, and to sell their books<sup>1</sup>.

We have already seen, at the beginning of this chapter, how Abailard also connected wealth with decay; and Mabillon connects them equally plainly in his rehearsal of the causes of decadence in earlier times<sup>2</sup>. Even to the end of the Middle Ages, good churchmen recognized clearly that the very perfection of church ornament and ceremonial might in itself be a snare. Imbart de la Tour quotes from a significant speech of "the most brilliant spokesman of the clergy, Jean de Rély," at that meeting of the French Estates which undertook to grapple with church reform in 1483<sup>3</sup>. "All men know," said this bold orator to the king in full parliament, "that there is no Rule left [in the monasteries], no devotion and no religious discipline." He

<sup>1</sup> iv, 70 d; cf. iv, 77 d.

<sup>2</sup> AA.SS.O.S.B. vol. v, introd. § 141. An equally orthodox modern Roman Catholic, in his monograph on the great abbey of Gladbach, gives the same reason: "Two causes above all others contributed to the religious decay of this abbey; the preponderance of the aristocratic element in the monastery, and the growth of its endowments" (*Gladbach*, p. 77). Medieval writers were so unanimous here, until it became necessary to meet the pleas of heretics for disendowment,—and, even then, so many orthodox disciplinarians confessed the danger of wealth as frankly as their fathers had confessed it—that it is very difficult to understand Dom Morin's attitude. The subject is so important that I add a few more references taken almost at random; *Exordium Magnum*, col. 1144; *Spec. Morale*, cols. 573 e and 574 and 1335; Bromyard, P. III, 5, 22, 29, 31; Nider, *De Ref. Religiosorum*, pp. 90, 117 and 250-2. This last passage is the more important, because this zealous Dominican was still more vexed by heresy than he was by the decay of the monastic Orders; he already saw the imminence of religious revolution.

<sup>3</sup> *Origines*, II, 487.

went on to protest against the extravagance of these men vowed to professional poverty—against

the great sumptuousness of great buildings, the beauty of stones and marbles, the gold and silver of chalices and lamps, the wealth of copes and altar-cloths, of cloth of gold and velvet and silk, to the neglect of the choice and the fitness of those who minister at those altars—

in short, against precisely those things which modern apologists adduce to prove that monachism was still healthy in the sixteenth century<sup>1</sup>.

So far were medieval disciplinarians from attaching any moral value to wealth and outward magnificence, that they frankly ascribed some of the worst evils to these causes. Asser, in his life of Alfred, traces the notorious decay of English monachism either to the Danish ravages or to the monks' "too great abundance in wealth"<sup>2</sup>. The Cluniac Ralph Glaber, writing about 1045, again connects wealth definitely and repeatedly with decay. The author of the *Exordium Magnum*, writing of St Stephen Harding's reforms (1119), emphasizes the saint's puritanical anxiety

that nothing savouring of pride or superfluity should be left in God's house (wherein [the early Cistercians] yearned to serve God devoutly by day and night) or should ever corrupt that poverty, guardian of virtue, which they had willingly chosen for God's sake.

He goes on to describe a puritanical plainness of church ornaments which anticipated the Franciscan puritanism, and proceeds to estimate the moral advantages of this poverty.

How many, tilled under the hoe of discipline in this Cistercian Order, are now bearing the fruits of continence, who, if they had been placed

<sup>1</sup> I deal with this more fully in my third volume. Hugues de St-Cher had already protested against the attempt to justify beautiful buildings on religious grounds (iv, 184 c). It is interesting to note that Dom Morin's point of view was shared by those relaxed seventeenth century Benedictines who, when Mabillon began to write a true history of their Order, moved heaven and earth to get his book suppressed and the author silenced. In the petition to the Chapter General which was got up against him, Article 8 began: "[He has dishonoured Benedictinism] by giving as cause of the decay of the Order, and the ruin of observance, that the monks had too much wealth and defended their property too warmly by means of lawsuits" (*Mélanges Mabillon*, 1908, p. 97).

<sup>2</sup> Asser, ed. Stevenson, § 93; Glaber in P.L. vol. 142, cols. 635 d, 636 b, 637 b; cf. 655 d; *Exordium* in P.L. vol. 185, col. 1011; *Annales*, v, 498; Arnoldi *Chronica Slavorum*, lib. III, § 10.

elsewhere, where the rigour of discipline flourished not, would easily have fallen into the monstrous evil of pleasures and carnal desires!

Mabillon, in his *Annales Benedictini*, under the year 1109, quotes another contemporary remark about Stephen Harding: "It was noted as miraculous that, during his abbacy, the monastery of Cîteaux grew in lands and possessions, yet decreased not in religious observance." But perhaps the most emphatic testimony in this period comes from the abbot Arnold of Lübeck, who wrote before 1210, and had been a prominent monk from at least 1170 onwards. He confessed to writing most unwillingly, but under a compelling sense of duty:

I will speak therefore, that I may blush for mine own faults while I rebuke those of others. What was the life of the monks of old? pure innocence, the path of righteousness, the model of right life, the way to Paradise!... Princes, seeing this purity of life, glorified it, and, loving it above gold and the topaz, enriched it most abundantly with broad acres of land. But, while the monks' possessions grew, their religion vanished. Their abundance of earthly things tempted them to live after the flesh and to mind the things that are of the flesh. Charity grew cold, worldliness crept in; there was no place for religion when elation had once entered, nor for humility, when lordliness had put her to flight. These men, who might not lawfully even possess aught of their own, began to covet other men's goods; and thus the mere form of religion was left, while the whole norm of righteousness had perished from among them. O monk, monk!... thou keepest not the law, but boastest pharisaically of thy mere cowl and tonsure<sup>1</sup>!

Therefore, though the increase of monastic wealth and numbers was very marked during the century before St Bernard, it must not be supposed that holiness waxed proportionately among the monasteries in general. On the contrary, this superfluity of wealth was one of the things which the Cistercians set themselves to reform. The large majority of Benedictines and Cluniacs might seek to justify the existing state of things; but that unrepentant conservatism was precisely what brought them into conflict with the reforming Orders. More than one of these reformers expressed his ideal in words which are very often connected with St Francis, yet which he was far from the first

<sup>1</sup> *Chron. Slav.* III, § 10.



to use; it was these new men's aim "to follow, naked, the naked Christ."

The Cistercian revolt (as we must again call it) began at the end of the eleventh century. The abbey of Molesme, in Burgundy, was a great and respectable house; having made its mark, it had become rich and populous. There is no reason to suppose that it was below the average of other great houses; it was pretty certainly far above the average of the tiny "cells" among which the monastic population was too often dispersed, and which St Bernard frankly characterized as "synagogues of Satan"<sup>1</sup>. Here, at Molesme, then, in 1098, a few of the brethren began to talk openly together: We read our daily chapter of the Rule publicly in the chapter-house; we read it, we are pledged by oath to keep it, yet keep it not; we are perjured; we live in mortal sin. Such private talk gathered force and grew to a head; but the malcontents were in a minority; there was no way of keeping the Rule strictly but by going forth from Molesme. For this, the abbot's leave was required; *stabilitas loci* was implied in their vow; only their abbot or the Pope could release them to go and serve God and St Benedict elsewhere. Abbot Robert not only gave them leave, but resolved to cast in his lot with them; the bishop of the diocese favoured the project also; and twenty-one monks went forth, pursued by the obloquy of their fellows, to a wild spot among the forests which was afterwards called Cîteaux<sup>2</sup>. Here the duke of Burgundy gave them land, and built them a rough wooden monastery. But the scandal of such a secession was too great; the average Benedictine could not afford to admit this principle of severance for salvation's sake; the Pope was appealed to, and ruled that Robert must go back to Molesme. Therefore the young colony of Cîteaux elected for their next abbot one Alberic, who had been prior of Molesme and had suffered stripes and prison from his brethren for his share in the revolt. In 1100, Alberic obtained papal confirmation for the new foundation of Cîteaux. No outer enemy was now to be feared, and it only remained to be seen

<sup>1</sup> Epp. 78 and 254.

<sup>2</sup> If the abbot had not been on their side, we should have found here the same embitterment of the conflict which we find in the almost exactly parallel case of Fountains; for which see Dugdale-Caley, v, 286 ff. and W. St J. Hope, *Fountains Abbey*, in *Yorks. Archaeol. Journal*, xv (1900).

how large a proportion of Benedictines were willing to try this venture of faith, and return to the original Rule. Fortune favoured the reformers in one way; for on Alberic's death in 1107 they found a very remarkable successor in St Stephen Harding of Sherborne. After a somewhat wayward youth, Stephen had found his way to Cîteaux; he was a fighting man who saw here a good fight to be fought; and it was he who set his personal stamp upon the new foundation<sup>1</sup>. The so-called *Carta Caritatis* was his work; an extraordinarily precise and business-like document fixing the Cistercian constitution in all its details, which is said to have been confirmed by Paschal II in 1107, but which, more probably, was first ratified by the votes of the primary General Chapter, held in 1119 and confirmed in that year by Calixtus II<sup>2</sup>. The puritan note, which comes out so strongly in all great monastic reforms, is most conspicuous here. No crosses of silver or gold were permitted, but only of painted wood. The candlesticks and censers were to be of plain iron or copper; the vestments of linen or fustian; St Bernard's own chasuble, which still survives, is of cotton. The altar cloths were of linen unembroidered; no curious carving was permitted in the churches, no stained glass, and no paintings on wall or pillar. The same simplicity prevailed in all domestic arrangements. St Benedict had prescribed the peasant-farmer's regimen of assiduous work and homely, if abundant, fare; and to this regimen the Cistercian strictly bound himself. He was to till his own lands, with the help of the lay brethren and a few hired servants; he was to eschew the ordinary monastic advantages of agricultural capitalism on a great scale—monopolies of mills or ovens, bondmen and bondwomen, tithe-endowments and rent-charges, economic partnership with other farmers—everything, in fact, which enabled the average Benedictine to "live by the sweat of other men"<sup>3</sup>. He repudiated, in short, all economic privileges of which he found no trace in the Rule or

<sup>1</sup> His life is very fully told in Newman's series, *Lives of the English Saints*.

<sup>2</sup> Miraeus, *Chronicon Cisterciensis Ordinis*, p. 33; D'Arbois de Jubainville, p. 148. This *Carta Caritatis*, the contemporary *Exordium Parvum* (also drawn up, it is almost certain, by St Stephen Harding), and the General Chapter statutes collected in 1134, give a very clear picture of the first Cistercian ideal.

<sup>3</sup> These safeguards of early simplicity are briefly and excellently summarized by E. Hoffmann in *Hist. Jahrbuch*, xxxi (1910), 702-4.

the Life of St Benedict. He has been accused, especially by modern writers, of going beyond the Founder's prescriptions, and exaggerating Benedictine asceticism. But this is only true to the extent to which every reaction must always contain an element of unconscious exaggeration; the very struggle to revert to a stricter past does almost unavoidably over-emphasize, if only to a small extent, those particular principles which others have meanwhile relaxed. Even S. R. Maitland, who generally holds the scales far more impartially, is definitely unjust to the Cistercians here<sup>1</sup>. He does not notice that Peter the Venerable's own words to his brother-Cluniacs, in those *Statutes* from which I have already quoted, fully justify St Bernard on all the main points of difference between Cistercian and Cluniac<sup>2</sup>.

St Stephen Harding was a great ruler and a great man of business; but he evidently lacked the more tender and persuasive qualities of a perfect missionary. The "Novum Monasterium" of Cîteaux succeeded admirably in keeping the Rule for itself, but it failed to attract others. While the original reformers, one by one, were paying their debt to mortality, "fresh adhesions were rare," writes the chronicler of the *Exordium Magnum*; and the little community "had almost come to the gate of despair" (P.L. vol. 185, col. 1101). Then, suddenly, they were joined by a young noble who brought with him 29 other converts, all "nobiles aut litterati" like himself. This was the man who made the real greatness of the Order, and after whose name the Cistercians were often called *Bernardines* in later speech.

<sup>1</sup> *The Dark Ages*, chap. xxii.

<sup>2</sup> See below, Ch. xxi. Peter's *Statuta* are in P.L. vol. 189, col. 1026. Compare also Mabillon's remarks in *Annales*, v, 403, and Ordericus Vitalis in P.L. vol. 188, col. 641. The monk of Kremsmünster seems to have summed up the contemporary verdict with general accuracy when he wrote: "Then arose new Orders wherein many men and women are distinguished by miracles of virtue, while those who professed the Rules of St Austin and St Benedict were straying grievously from the first famous institutions of their Orders." The two words *virtutum miraculis* may perhaps mean "by signs and wonders." The quotation is printed by Schmieder, p. 9.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ST BERNARD

ST BERNARD'S fame has perhaps been too much overshadowed in recent years by that of St Francis of Assisi. He has also suffered through his quarrel with Abailard, though here he only kept up the traditions of his Order<sup>1</sup>, and defended a conservative position in theology which was destined soon to be swept away by the rise of the universities. It is true that, on all the main points at issue between the two men, the ablest and most orthodox churchmen of the next century tacitly decided against St Bernard. Not only were Abailard's main philosophical positions triumphant<sup>2</sup>, but his root-principle triumphed, that revealed religion must be busily and constantly supported by reason. The great scholastic philosophers derive not from Bernard but from Abailard:

To men like St Bernard the *Summa Theologiae* of St Thomas, with its full statement of objections and free discussion of difficulties, would have seemed as shocking an exhibition of human pride and intellectual self-sufficiency as the *Theologia* of Abelard<sup>3</sup>.

It may be said, in fact, that what most offended the saint was the idea that there should be a philosophy of religion at all; he fought against the application of strict logical methods to revealed religion, even in its support. Here he followed what was tacitly, if not expressly, the general Benedictine tradition; and his position helps us to understand why the Benedictines had practically nothing to do with the founding of universities; why they scarcely ever supplied teachers to those universities, once founded; and why they appeared there, even as scholars, so tardily, so seldom and so reluctantly<sup>3</sup>. In 1244, when another

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.* of the Benedictines. It must be remembered that neither Cluniac nor Cistercian had any other Rule than Benedict's though each had his distinctive *consuetudines*—by-laws or customs.

<sup>2</sup> Rashdall, *Doctrine and Development*, p. 143; cf. pp. 134, 138 and the same author's *Universities*, etc. I, 53-5.

<sup>3</sup> I deal more fully with Benedictine learning in my second volume. The non-monastic origin of the universities is most clearly proved by Father H. Denifle in his *Universitäten d. Mittelalters*, esp. pp. 656 ff.

English Stephen, abbot of Clairvaux, founded a Cistercian college at Paris which was called after St Bernard, it was certainly an unconstitutional act; even the Pope's support did not save the new movement from much criticism; and Stephen's deposition in 1255 is ascribed by Matthew Paris to the unpopularity which he thus incurred<sup>1</sup>.

Disastrous, again, was that Second Crusade in which St Bernard interested himself so directly; and there were other failures mingled with his great political successes outside the cloister. But here it would be most unjust to lay anything whatever to the charge of the man who asked for nothing more than to be left undisturbed in his beloved Clairvaux. No man ever strove harder for worldly success than Bernard strove for retirement; and, of all his heavy sacrifices, assuredly the greatest was his frequent obedience to the call of popes or prelates who needed his help, and who thus drew him away from mortification, silence, and prayer. It is as a monk that Bernard should be judged; for he would never willingly have said or done anything outside his narrowest monastic duties; his whole extra-claustral work was a charitable concession to the necessities of other men, or of the church which he loved even more than his own community. In spirit, he was nothing but a monk, and in that spirit alone are we here concerned with him. We may thus be better able to realize why later writers looked up to him as the Fifth Doctor of the Church; why (as Vacandard points out) much of the *Imitatio* is borrowed from his writings; and why even Luther paid him a tribute which he vouchsafed to very few medieval writers. A generation which knows Bernard mainly through his extra-claustral activities, and therefore sees in him the maker and unmaker of popes, the organizer of a crusade, and the enemy of Abailard and Arnold of Brescia, is a generation which does him great injustice<sup>2</sup>.

Few men ever brought to the service of an ideal, chosen so

<sup>1</sup> D'Arbois, pp. 66-8; M. Paris an. 1256.

<sup>2</sup> In writing a full life of St Bernard, it would be necessary to discuss the definitely unfavourable hints of men like Walter Map (*De Nugis*, C.S. pp. 40 ff.) and Abailard's pupil, Berengarius (P.L. vol. 178, cols. 1857 ff.). But to notice them in a work of this scale would be to distort the picture; on a general survey of the whole evidence, it seems beyond all doubt that the saint was exceptional even among exceptional men.

early and unflinchingly, a nobler combination of qualities. Francis was born of the merchant nobility, Bernard sprang from the fighting caste. He was born at the castle of Fontaine near Dijon, on that hill where the orphanage stands now. The castle is gone, though its inner and outer bailey may still be traced; even the little chapel has been replaced by a later medieval church; but the eternal hills stand as they stood in Bernard's time. The village street still winds steeply upward; and the pilgrim who has walked the short three miles from Dijon finds his labour well rewarded. From the castle knoll we look straight across to the rival hill-village of Talant with its wonderful church,



Fontaine-les-Dijon from the Vineyards.

and sideways down upon the great city; and thence again, over the plain of Burgundy, to the blue line of Jura and those magical subalpine marches which Ruskin has immortalized<sup>1</sup>. At our feet are the vineyards, rooted in a rich soil which turns orange-brown to the sun, and alternating with even richer orchards; here we have "la vraie Bourgogne, l'aimable et vineuse Bourgogne, où tout le monde s'appelle frère ou cousin; pays de bons vivants et des joyeux Noël"<sup>2</sup>. Bernard's mother, descended from the ancient

<sup>1</sup> *Praeterita*, vol. i, chap. ix; *Seven Lamps*, vi, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Michelet, *Hist. de France*, l. iii, *ad fin.* He adds: "La Bourgogne est le pays des orateurs, celui de la pompeuse et solennelle éloquence, c'est de la partie élevée de la province que sont parties les voix les plus retentissantes de la France, celles de St-Bernard, de Bossuet et de Buffon."

dukes of Burgundy, came from that castle of Montbard which is now famous as Buffon's home. His father was one of the most trusted vassals of the count of Burgundy; it was noted that this prince had never lost a battle in which Tescelin *li Sors* had fought by his side. The very surname is significant; Tescelin the Tawny-haired was a descendant of the conquering race; yellow-brown or yellow are very rare shades in modern Dijon, as the traveller may easily see for himself in street or theatre or church. Bernard, then, though French in culture, was Burgundian by race; less truly a child of the southern sun than of the great northern forests; his fair hair and transparent skin and slender figure speak for that. No peoples were so suddenly or so thoroughly Christianized as these northern invaders. The refinements of thought which had troubled Origen and Augustine, or those which were destined to trouble Pascal and Newman in later days, slept among the vast multitude in the twelfth century. There was an all-embracing Church, ubiquitous, most visible and sensible and audible; unrivalled, if only because it suffered no rival; the natural refuge of all, with almost negligible exceptions, among those who were attracted by learning or faith or discipline. To the simple mind, it held out attractions almost as tangible as the rudimentary rites of paganism; to the enquirer, it offered ineffable mysteries. Thus equipped, it conquered all the conquerors in turn; Goth, Vandal, Burgundian, Frank, Lombard, and Norman. But the latest arrivals came most suddenly and completely to the Church; whether because these maturer minds were ripe for a complete conversion, or because the more feudalized pagans found a semi-feudal, semi-pagan Church to welcome them, to teach them, and at the same time to grow up with them, like an early-married mother with her child.

This Fontaine family had high traditions of uprightness and piety; and Bernard lived to see his father, his mother, his sister and his brothers bound by the monastic vows. His own personal beauty was remarkable from childhood; and of his appearance in later life we have one precious description which brings him nearer to us, perhaps, than any other man of his century.

His body (writes one who knew him well) was marked by a certain grace rather spiritual than corporeal; his face was radiant with a light not of earth but of heaven; his eyes shone with angelic purity and

dovelike simplicity. Such was the beauty of the inner man, that it brake forth by manifest tokens to the sight, and even the outer man seemed bedewed with the abundance of his inward purity and grace. His whole body was meagre and emaciated. His skin itself was of the finest texture, with a slight flush of red on the cheeks, seeing that all the natural heat of his frame had been drawn thither by constant meditation and the zeal of his holy compunction. His hair was of a yellow inclining to white; his beard was auburn, sprinkled towards the end of his life with grey. His stature was of an honourable middle size, yet inclining to tallness<sup>1</sup>.

This set description is borne out by other uncalculated touches which come out in the biographies—for, here again, Bernard was fortunate in the number and fulness of his contemporary or sub-contemporary biographers; or (shall we say) his greatness created a whole biographical cycle. One, recording the saint's answer to one of his own questions, notes the habitual charm of his smile; another tells how he met a heretic of Languedoc, who, anxious to discount the effect of St Bernard's discourses, came up to him as he mounted his horse to depart,

and, raising his head, cried aloud in the hearing of all men: "My lord abbot, know that the horse of our master, whom ye paint in such evil colours, is not so fat and well-liking as this good steed of yours." The saint answered mildly and patiently, without change of face or mind: "I confess, friend, that thou sayest truth. Yet thou must know that this beast which thou castest in my teeth is a senseless animal, of those which nature hath formed to bow his head and to obey his belly; wherefore, if he eateth his fill and waxeth fat, therein is no injustice nor offence to God, for the horse liveth after his own fashion. But I and thy master, before God's judgement-seat, shall not be arraigned according to our horses' necks; nay, each shall be judged for his own. Now therefore, may it please you to consider my neck and to see whether it be grosser than that of thy master, so as to lend justice, perchance, to thy rebuke?" Thus saying, he cast back his cowl and bared his head to the shoulders, displaying his long and slender neck; which, thin and emaciated as it was, yet by heaven's grace it was as white and comely as that of a swan; so that all who stood by rejoiced with great joy at this sight, and blessed the Lord God who had put into His servant's mouth so ready and just an answer, to the confusion and stopping of the mouth that spake wicked things<sup>2</sup>.

And let us not forget that in one most important respect he rose

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey, afterwards abbot of Clairvaux, in P.L. vol. 185, col. 303.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 185, cols. 246, 427; cp. 230.



definitely above his age and his environment; amid all his mortifications he repudiated the idea of exalting personal neglect or uncleanness into a monastic virtue<sup>1</sup>.

His mother suckled all her seven children herself; "the noble lady disdained to commit them to another's breasts, but infused into them something of her own goodness with this mother's milk." She brought her sons up to plain living even in a noble household; Bernard was the third in age. Of his boyhood little is recorded but his purity, his love of meditation, and his violent headaches. He gained rapid proficiency in Latin letters; and Abailard's friend Bérenger of Poitiers cast it in his teeth that he had been a precocious poet. Literary ambitions naturally attracted him; but in his home he had already taken too strong a tinge of that faith which compels a man to choose between time and eternity. One day in the autumn of 1111, at the age of 21, he turned aside as usual to pray by himself in a little wayside church. In that hour the agony of conversion came upon him; *haec est mutatio dexteræ Excelsi*; there, before the altar, he "poured forth his soul like water," and thenceforth his vocation was irrevocably fixed. After an apprenticeship of six months at the priory of Châtillon-sur-Seine, he came to Cîteaux in the spring of 1112, bringing with him those 29 other *nobiles aut litterati*. Thenceforward he would constantly remind himself that "the road winds uphill all the way—yea, to the very end." *Bernarde, ad quid venisti?*—"What are you here for?" "To be crucified with Christ"<sup>2</sup>. He lived to see father, mother, sister and all five brothers in the cloister, mainly through his own example. One brother left his knighthood in the world; another persuaded his wife to share his sacrifice, and to take the veil when he took the frock<sup>3</sup>. Nivard, the youngest, was still "a boy playing with his fellows in the village street," when he was fired by Bernard's example. For once, the saint faltered, and counselled the child rather to take up his father's office and inheritance. "It is not just," replied Nivard, "that ye should all take heaven to yourselves and leave the world to me"; and, as soon as his age permitted, he took the vows. By this time Bernard was already abbot; for Cîteaux, which at his accession had been so near to despair, grew so rapidly from that time forward that

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 478.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 236.

it threw out three new colonies in two years; and with the third of these, Clairvaux, Bernard himself was sent in command. He lived to see 350 abbeys, with 150 dependent cells, in the Order; within 50 years of his death it was one of the greatest of European institutions, with 530 abbeys and more than 650 dependencies. For here was a man as business-like as Stephen Harding, but with the soul of a knight and poet to boot; fitted to be an intellectual leader in his age, but far more exceptional in character than in intellect. He had the fearless resolution of his race; the physical fearlessness of a Nelson, never counting the odds, but seeing at a glance where the chances of victory lay, and attacking with that swift and instinctive directness which itself is half success. St Catharine of Siena spoke plainly enough to the popes and great men of her time, if only she could have left it there; but, at the end of her bitterest and most merited rebukes, she too often threw herself almost grovelling at the pontiff's feet—"pardon my presumption, that I presume to write to you"—"pardon, Father, my ignorance"—"pardon me, pardon me!"<sup>1</sup> St Bernard laid the stripes on with equal directness, and left them to smart. "This servant of God was eminent above all men in liberty of spirit, yet with humility and mildness, so that he seemed as it were to fear no man and to reverence all men"<sup>2</sup>. To the pope he writes

I speak with confidence because I love with fidelity . . . There is one voice among all who rule their flocks here with faithful care—that justice is perishing in the Church, the keys of the Church are being set at nought. . . They impute the cause of this to you and the Roman Court. . . In writing this, I should fear to be branded for presumption, if I knew not who you are to whom I write, and I who write. But I know your natural mildness, and I know that you know me, and the affection with which I dare to write you these words, sweetest and most loving Father<sup>3</sup>.

And again, to Eugenius III, after painting the court of Rome as a sink of litigation and unjust appeals, he says plainly: "If thou art Christ's disciple, let thy zeal be kindled and let thine authority rise up against this shamelessness"<sup>4</sup>. Nor was he less

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, tr. V. D. Scudder, 1905, pp. 123, 133, 166.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 318. <sup>3</sup> Ep. 178.

<sup>4</sup> *De Consid.* I, § 11; throughout this book Bernard speaks as a loving master to his old pupil.

plain spoken to the great men of the world; to Louis VII he wrote (Ep. 221):

From whom, but from the devil, can I say that this policy of yours proceeds?...your advisers in this matter seek not your honour but their own profit—nay, the devil's will...Whatsoever it may please you to do with your own realm and crown and soul, we, as sons of the Church, cannot hold our peace in face of the insults and contempt with which our Mother is trodden underfoot.

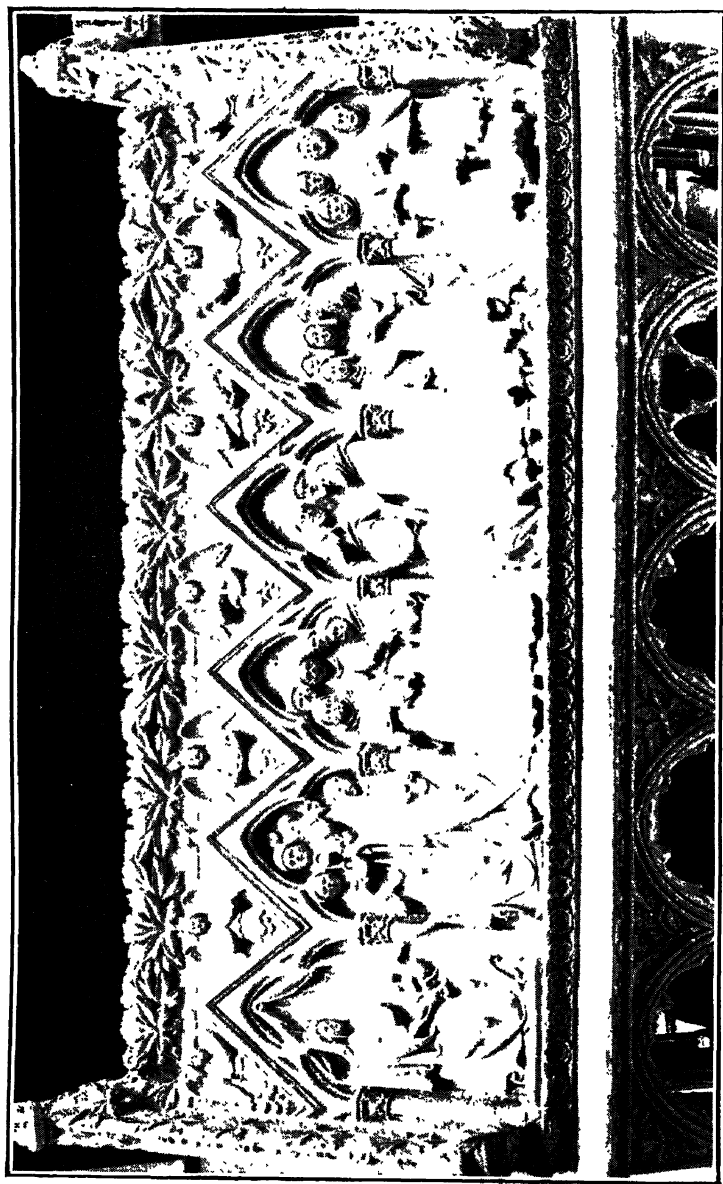
To this he added moral courage; few men have been strong enough to stand so stiffly upon the ground they had once chosen, yet so constantly mindful of that Pauline warning: "let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." Courage, again, was required beyond ordinary measure for the mortifications which Bernard accepted as the duty of his profession. The fasts, severe in any case and cruelly exaggerated by him who had come "to be crucified with Christ"; the coarse food, fit enough for a peasant but unsuited to a frame which had become too emaciated for severe manual work, and was wasted still thinner by constant wear of mind and spirit; the nightly vigils; all combined to ruin his digestion. He lost all taste for food; once he drank oil by mistake for wine; water was the only thing for which he had a real appetite, since it cooled his inflamed throat. His stomach often rejected all food; at those times, he was unable to go into choir with the brethren, but waited at the door and followed their service at a distance. By a pathetic revenge of nature, he was at last compelled unwillingly to accept valetudinarian indulgences; and Etienne de Bourbon tells us how Louis VII's messengers, bringing a present of fish to St Bernard in his later days, found him in the infirmary before a roast capon (p. 422).

The King, unable to believe this of so great a saint, told him in familiar speech of his messengers' report. St Bernard confessed that this was true; since, so long as he was in health and had felt his bodily force sufficient to endure, he had worn it down with abstinences; so that this body, unable to bear any longer those burdens, must now be borne and sustained itself; unto which his superior constrained him. The King, hearing this, was edified.

Bernard's writings testify, almost involuntarily, to his naturally keen observation and sense of beauty; yet these he resolutely



ABBAY CHURCH OF FONTENAY



TOMB OF ST STEPHEN OF OBAZINE

repressed as hindrances to his vocation. In the novice-room at Cîteaux, in which his whole first year was spent, he never noticed the vault; nor did he know whether the eastern wall of the church had a single or a triple window<sup>1</sup>. After a day's ride along the Lake of Geneva, he astounded his companions by betraying complete ignorance that any such water had been within their sight<sup>2</sup>. Therefore it is natural that, with all his literary capacities and his earlier literary attainments, he should show himself rather, in after life, as a man of one book. He quotes Virgil and Ovid, Ambrose, Augustine and Gregory; Jerome less frequently; Origen's commentaries he knew; but his real literary force is in his knowledge of the Bible text. It was once a Protestant superstition that no Catholic ever knew his Bible well. For all English-speaking people who take the trouble to get at the facts, that legend was finally destroyed in S. R. Maitland's *Dark Ages*; but Maitland leaves room for, without himself propagating, an equally false legend on the other side. The rough truth may be put very simply; the best medieval writers knew their Vulgate very well; a great many more knew parts of it well enough, especially those portions which happened to come in their service-books. The average priest knew nothing outside those service-books, and not even all that was inside; the lower priesthood, as Roger Bacon and other equally credible witnesses testify, understood little or nothing even of their church offices. The laity could seldom read Latin with any ease, outside the sort of hotel-waiter's vocabulary with which a bailiff wrote his accounts or a scrivener his legal formulae; therefore the most educated and ambitious seldom got far beyond the Psalms and the Sunday Gospels and Epistles. A few of the richest possessed Bibles in French or Psalters in French or English; but, as soon as a general desire for vernacular translation arose, this was opposed by the ecclesiastical authorities, and for the rest of the Middle Ages vernacular Bibles were either explicitly condemned, or lay under a strong suspicion of heresy<sup>3</sup>. So strongly did the church in general disapprove of vernacular religious books on the whole, that this reason has been plausibly urged to

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 238.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 306.

<sup>3</sup> This is fully brought out in Miss M. Deanesly's *The Lollard Bible*, 1920, esp. ch. viii.

account for the extraordinarily small circulation of the French translation which was made, at a very early date, from some of St Bernard's sermons. But Bernard himself, as we have said, knew his Bible inside and out; Luther and Bunyan knew it no better. He had conned it a thousand times over in lonely meditation and made the whole book his own; and this is how we must explain that saying of his, that his best teachers had been the oaks and the beeches—reading and meditation in the forest round Clairvaux. The Bible became bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, so that, when he spoke from the Bible, it was as if he were composing, and not repeating; as if the Holy Ghost were speaking directly from his mouth<sup>1</sup>. Many will still remember how the late Dean Vaughan was accustomed to read the Pauline epistles with a quiet depth of conviction, and an exact justice of emphasis born of lifelong study, which gave the impression that he himself was reasoning with the congregation in his own words, rather than rehearsing those of another.

Vaughan, with his other qualities, had the keenest eye for human foibles; and so had Bernard. It would be difficult to find any more effective satire in medieval literature than we can find here and there in his letters, and even in his sermons. To those who pleaded Paul's advice to Timothy that he should not stint himself with wine, Bernard replied: "Show me a Timothy, and I will feed him on gold if you will, and give him balsam to drink!" He was pitiless in scorn of those monks who were solicitous about the dignity of their dress, or who needed beautiful churches to stimulate their devotion<sup>2</sup>. From Bernard's letters to the abbey of St-Germer de Fly, the abbey where Guibert of Nogent had passed his earlier monastic years, Gibbon

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 240-1.

<sup>2</sup> These passages, with others by or relating to St Bernard, are translated on pp. 68 ff. of my *Medieval Garner*. An Anglican clergyman, S. J. Eales, produced a good translation of his letters and many of his sermons. This was printed after his death in "The Catholic Standard Library," along with Cardinal Gasquet's *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries*. The editors, however, have suppressed at least one important piece of evidence; the text of Ep. 7, § 8, now runs: "How then can either the permission of your abbot avail to make that permissible which is (as I have already shown beyond question) wholly evil?" St Bernard's actual words are "either your abbot's command or the Pope's permission"—*vel abbatis jussio vel Papae permissio*; but these words of a medieval saint were too unorthodox to be printed in a modern Catholic Standard Library.

might have learned, as he learned from Pascal, "to wield the weapon of grave and temperate irony" (Epp. 67, 68). And Bernard strove to keep his inner eye as clear as the outer. "He was wont, from his own experience, to define a wise man as one to whom all things taste even as they really are—*sapiens, cui omnia sapiunt sicut sunt.*" He loved that text from 1 Cor. xiv, 38, Vulg.: *si quis ignorat, ignorabitur*—he who ignores, shall be ignored by God. The one occasion on which he fell very definitely short of this ideal has been recounted with perhaps a little exaggeration of emphasis by J. C. Morison<sup>1</sup>; but the lapse itself is frankly admitted by Vacandard<sup>2</sup>. St Bernard adopted a crooked policy; he recommended the Pope to let their enemy perish in his own inventions; and the result brought merited difficulties upon Pope, Saint, and Church<sup>3</sup>.

With his usually direct outward and inward vision accords his ruling common-sense. When the canons of the great cathedral of Lyons attempted to popularize the idea of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, it was Bernard who most definitely withstood them<sup>4</sup>, though his personal devotion to her was extreme, and the Cistercians claimed in a special sense to be Children of Mary. It was that letter of his which did more than any other single thing to postpone the final proclamation of the dogma until 1854; and we have seen how fervent Mariolaters of the later Middle Ages did not hesitate to preach that the Saint bore an eternal spot on his breast in heaven, to atone for his share in this dispute<sup>5</sup>. His treatise *De Praecepto et Dispensatione* is a model of judicial discussion on thorny points of claustral casuistry. Very significant, again, is his love of the word *ordo*, his overwhelming sense of the social side of religion, and the eagerness with which he catches at this word, in the Bible, to emphasize the necessity of cooperation and discipline and subordination even in the struggle for personal salvation—the value, not only of the individual effort, but also of all that made him ready to sacrifice himself for his own Cistercian Order. In Book v of his *De Consideratione*, § 20, he comes to speak to the

<sup>1</sup> p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> II, 189, 197.

<sup>3</sup> Epp. 217, 322.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. 174.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 18. St Bonaventura, for his opposition to the same doctrine, was actually consigned to Purgatory; see p. 664 of my *Med. Garner*.



pope of those unclerical clerics who swarmed even in the twelfth century, and who too often took the best places.

These men neither fight as knights, nor preach the gospel as clerics. Of what order, then, are they? . . . It is written concerning the resurrection from the dead, "Every man in his own order"; in what order, then, shall these men rise? . . . I fear lest they find themselves, on that day, in that place whereof Job speaketh: "A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and of the shadows of death, without any order, and where the light is darkness."

The world, the natural world, is disorder; the soul that is to be saved must order itself by stern renunciation and self-control. Where, in Isaiah xxx, 15, the Authorized Version has "in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength," the Vulgate reads "in silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra." That text was always in Bernard's mind; and by that he ordered his life; the silence was the silence of the monastery, the silence of the Order, prescribed 600 years ago by St Benedict; and hope was the lawful portion of every true Benedictine; a hope that maketh not ashamed.

Bernard's character comes out most clearly in his letters, which are certainly among the most intimate documents of the Middle Ages. In them, the art of a writer who had profited by his classical training never obscures his deep and intense feeling; he writes far more directly than the average of his contemporaries; and this correspondence, by itself, would suffice to show us why Dante's infallible eye pitched upon charity as the saint's distinguishing characteristic: *la vivace carità di colui*<sup>1</sup>. He was among the few who protested most publicly against the massacres of Jews which accompanied the enthusiasm of the Second Crusade; he made no attempt to excite the populace to the burning of heretics—for, in those days, such autos-da-fè were rather popular than official, and the mob was only too ready to persecute whenever any influential churchman gave the word. As abbot of Clairvaux for nearly forty years, at a time when the monastery was not only living its own life, but serving as a huge seminary for the whole Order, he must have had literally thousands of converts through his hands; and, while making all allowance for the biographers' temptations to exaggerate, we

<sup>1</sup> *Parad.* xxi, 109.

wonder far more at the permanence of Bernard's influence than at its immediate effect<sup>1</sup>. Dr Arnold (Stanley tells us) would say that "it was the first, second, and third duty of a schoolmaster to get rid of unpromising subjects." St Bernard rose above this stern principle; he could ignore the Lake of Geneva, but never the least need of his spiritual children, "the babes whom I have brought forth in the Gospel"<sup>2</sup>. In the preface to his *De Consideratione*, he addresses his former pupil, Eugenius III, now raised to the papacy, and insists upon this unbroken bond.

Hast thou mounted upon Peter's throne? Though thou shouldest walk on the wings of the wind, yet shalt thou not escape from my affection. I have lost the duty of a mother towards thee; but no man shall deprive me of the mother's love. Thou wert once part of my very bowels; not so easily shalt thou now be torn from me.

To another he quotes from Isaiah: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee." In one sad case his friends had evidently tried to comfort him; he had liberated his soul; he was clean from the blood of the sinner; but Bernard repudiated all such consolation<sup>3</sup>. Most touching of all is an episode which is told in the *Exordium Magnum* (P.L. vol. 185, col. 422).

On one occasion, he had been absent longer than usual for causes concerning the Church; for at the Pope's bidding, however unwillingly, he was oftentimes compelled to go forth for making peace, for healing some schism, or for confuting heresies. So, having unravelled that complexity of causes which had called him forth, he came back to Clairvaux, and entered the novice-room as soon as opportunity offered, in order that these his newborn tender children, whom he fed with his milk, might be the more copiously refreshed from the breasts of his consolation in proportion as they had long lacked the sweetness of his holy exhortations. Whithersoever the holy Father went, he sowed God's word over all waters, and scarcely ever returned without usury of spiritual gain, filling the Cell of Probation with a multitude of novices whose number sometimes reached the hundred... When therefore, as aforesaid, he had entered this Cell, and his persuasive and edifying tongue had cheered them all to the

<sup>1</sup> The one striking exception is the treachery of his trusted secretary Nicholas, for which see Morison, p. 429, and Maitland, *Dark Ages*, chaps. xxv, xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 144, § 2; cf. the whole of this letter and 143; also Epp. 1, §§ 7, 11; 4, § 1; 7, § 1; 11, § 2, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 108, § 3; cf. Epp. 70, 233, § 1.

more fervent observance of their holy purpose, he called one aside and said unto him, "My dearest son, whence cometh this sadness which feedeth so fatally upon thy heart's core?" The novice scarce dared speak for shame; then said this truly mild and humble man, who knew how to show himself to all men as a shepherd and no hireling: "I know, beloved son, I know how it is with thee; wherefore I pity thee with all a father's compassion and love. For during this my long-drawn absence, wherein perforce I lacked that bodily presence of my brethren which I so fervently desire, and God's grace supplied to my spirit that sight which my bodily eye lacked, then I was wont to return hither in soul, and to wander from room to room in diligent scrutiny of the demeanour of my brethren. In these wanderings I came unto this cell, where I found all the rest rejoicing in the fear of the Lord and girding their loins to the labours of penitence; but I sighed to see thee alone pining in bitter sadness. Then, when I would have caressed thee and drawn thee to myself, thou wouldst turn aside with averted face, weeping so bitterly that my very cowl was drenched with thy tears." With these words, and with the spiritual counsel wherewith the holy Father plied this captive soul, he put his grief to flight, and, from those depths of melancholy wherein he was almost overwhelmed, recalled him to the liberty of spiritual joy.

Here, then, is the real answer to those who see in Bernard only the persecutor of Abailard; the former's superiority in character was even greater than the latter's intellectual superiority. Both men saw plainly enough what was at stake in this conflict of principle; it was the whole question which is now being fought out between Ultramontanism and Modernism. The final concession of Bernard's principle would have meant that, whatever reserves might be made by nobler minds, the majority would necessarily gravitate to Manning's contention that Authority is the one guide of the Christian conscience, and that the appeal even to historical facts is a treason and a heresy. Abailard, on the other hand, though his personal unorthodoxy has often been much exaggerated, would doubtless have been willing to go to all lengths rather than surrender his reason; and this application of reason to faith has gradually evolved doctrines entirely incompatible with the authoritarian position. And, here already in the twelfth century, the two champions were stamped each with the marked characteristics of his own school. Catholicism—to use the word in that widest sense in which it applies not only to the

Roman but to a considerable party in the Anglican communion—has always shown more cohesion and a stronger social sense than its opponents, and has thus gone far to redeem its intellectual shortcomings. When individualism degenerates into selfishness, no amount of abstract truth will save it; the world is not so much moved by logic as by *savoir-vivre*; and the very wildest revivalist appeals more to humanity than the student whose speculations leave his own heart cold. Not that Abailard was lacking in feeling, any more than Bernard lacked intellect; but Bernard's combination of qualities was of a rarer type. True, he was as incapable of doing justice to Abailard's intellectual position as Wilberforce was of understanding the true significance of Darwinism; and, seeing how great an issue was at stake, he pursued Abailard unrelentingly so long as he judged him to be dangerous. But let us remember that, rare as those minds are which venture to pursue abstract truth to the very end—rarer still, those who, having found the truth, are fired with missionary zeal and willing, if need be, to go to the stake for the truth—yet rarest of all are those whose passion for souls is as absorbing as that other passion for knowledge; those who are willing to wrestle to the last, and, if need be, even to die at the last, for the men whom they see daily around them, with their common daily faults and unloveliness. Equal for equal, the love of speculation will never compete successfully with the love of our plain fellow-man. "Da mihi animas," as Newman loved to quote; "da mihi animas; caetera tolle tibi"<sup>1</sup>.

And it is this *vivace carità* which alone can explain Bernard's

<sup>1</sup> With all due respect, I would suggest that, for once, Dr R. L. Poole is scarcely fair to Bernard in his comments on this lamentable affair (*Illust. of the Hist. of Med. Thought and Learning*, 1920, pp. 134-45). Abailard, without being the bold and obvious heresiarch which some men would make him, must have known at the bottom of his heart that his method and his arguments were essentially solvent of a great deal in the established religion of his time. If he did not, it may perhaps be said that Bernard's opposition was still more justified; for then Bernard alone, of the two disputants, foresaw those inevitable tendencies which all men see now. The same criticism may be applied to Dr Rashdall's remarks in his *Universities of Europe*, I, 52 ff. If Abailard triumphed in the sense that he was the father of the Scholastics, Bernard also triumphed in the sense that even the orthodox Scholastics found themselves increasingly compelled to acknowledge the powerlessness of reason to *prove* (as apart from merely *approving*) the main dogmas of the Church, while others less orthodox gradually evolved the doctrine that a thing might be theologically true, though philosophically false.

most extraordinary influence. Like some other saints, he had great power over dumb animals<sup>1</sup>. When he came back from Italy in 1135, it was not only his own brethren of Clairvaux who felt that God's power was with them again, but

there flocked down, to meet him, from their rocky Alps, shepherds and cowherds and all manner of country-folk, crying from afar to seek his blessing; then they crept back up the mountain-gorges to their flocks, talking together and rejoicing that they had seen the man of God, and that his hand had been stretched over them for the blessing which they desired<sup>2</sup>.

Popes, cardinals and princes gave way to him: "they say" (wrote his old pupil Eugenius III) "that it is you who are pope, and not I"<sup>3</sup>. Peter the Venerable and other distinguished churchmen were sometimes wounded at his unsparing words, but never irreconcilably. His letters and sermons, even over this distance of time, have the force of Newman's; essential simplicity, searching penetration into men's hearts through the preacher's knowledge of his own, and enough real classical culture to give uncommon clearness and freshness to the words which gushed from this deep and living source. But the real secret was in the source itself: "Did not our hearts burn within us?" wrote one of his disciples in later years, feeling that nothing less than those sacred Emmaus-words could give a full measure of the truth. Bernard's eloquence was irresistible; mothers hid their sons, wives their husbands, to withdraw them from his compelling voice and glance<sup>4</sup>. Think of the qualities which, in ordinary life, make for success without friction. One man sees his final purpose so clearly, and is so evidently concentrated upon it—menace and cajolery are so obviously wasted upon him—that the world finds it cheaper to let him go his own way. Another

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 283; compare Bernard's own eagerness for the "God bless you!" of the simple shepherd-lads (Vitry, *Exempla*, p. 120: *Med. Garner*, p. 61).

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 329.

<sup>4</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 235. Compare the evidence of Giraldus Cambrensis, no blind admirer of the saint (*Gem. Eccl.* p. 152): "Another example is that of the blessed Bernard, who, preaching in French to Germans who were utterly ignorant of that tongue, stung them to such devotion and compunction that, with the greatest ease, he softened their hard hearts to the shedding of tears from their eyes, and to doing or believing all that he urged upon them; yet, these men had been altogether unmoved by the interpreters who faithfully rendered his sermon in their own tongue."

is so straightforward, so accustomed all his life to think aloud, that we pardon him the most inconvenient frankness; it is his way. A third is so unspotted from the world that we are forced to doubt of our own ideal where it clashes with his; another so loving and lovable that we have scarcely the heart even to correct his faults. St Bernard combined all these qualities, and more. Perhaps no such hard fighter ever made so few permanent enemies, especially since his common-sense marked clearly the limits to successful fighting. "When only one is angry," he said, "something may still be done; when both wax angry, there is no further profit." He made, then, an extraordinary number of converts, and kept them with extraordinary constancy to their new life. And to what a new life! No less than the original Rule, in that strictness which had almost been forgotten through this lapse of centuries; and not only in all its strictness, but in something more; for, as we have seen, some tinge of exaggeration, however involuntary, must always colour the resolute reformer.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CLAIRVAUX

LET us look now into the abbey of Clairvaux, such as Bernard made it. In proportion as it was truly Benedictine, it contrasted in many ways with what the reader will be prepared to expect, and still more with the average medieval monastery, as revealed to us in intimate chronicles and episcopal visitations.

If we are to accept the numbers given in the *Exordium Magnum*—and these, however startling, are rendered credible by unimpeachable statistics as to the rapid increase of the Order—there were enough monks at Clairvaux to fill more than a dozen of the largest English abbeys. There were sometimes, we are told, from 700 to 800, in spite of constant drafts to other houses; and among these were from 80 to 100 novices (P.L. vol. 185, cols. 363, 450; cf. 153). The puritanism was as strict there as at Cîteaux under St Stephen Harding; the church was bare; but in that same proportion the services were sung in spirit and in truth. There was no throng of layfolk in the nave; only the double choir of monks and lay-brethren; something of the plainness of early Clairvaux may be seen in the still-surviving abbey church of Fontenay, which was a daughter of Clairvaux and dates from St Bernard's own lifetime. "The season is chill and dark, and the breath of the morning is damp, and worshippers are few; but all this befits those who are by profession penitents and mourners, watchers and pilgrims"<sup>1</sup>. "Sinner that I am, my duty is not to teach but to mourn" so wrote St Bernard (Ep. 69), borrowing a sentence of Jerome's which echoed all down the monastic centuries<sup>2</sup>. Here, then, the Cistercian lived from day to day in silence, labour, and prayer, "eating his own sins and those of the world"<sup>3</sup>. For these monastic intercessions were credited with the most miraculous efficacy.

While King Philip-Augustus was at sea, on the way to his crusade, there arose one night a violent tempest. The king asked his companions

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. v (1891), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Epp. 89 and 365.

<sup>3</sup> Ep. 340, § 4.

every moment what time it might be. When at last he learned that it was midnight, he began to comfort all the rest, sailors and travellers, saying, "You cannot perish; for at this moment thousands of monks are rising from their beds and will soon be praying for us; after whom the parish priests will soon arise also and give us their prayers. Then the monks will sing their masses, and then again the parish priests; wherefore it cannot be but that we are saved."

The storm did indeed abate, and men attributed it to this clear proof of faith<sup>1</sup>.

The Cistercian, mourning for sin, showed his inward compunction in outer severity. "Let the monk," writes Arnulf of Boyers about 1150 A.D., in that *Mirror of Monks* sometimes attributed to St Bernard; "let the monk have no familiar friend . . . Let him be as Melchizedek, without father, without mother, without descent. . . Let him think as if he alone existed in this universe—only he and God." Music, held St Bernard, should be good but plain, and such as never to distract our attention from the words. He disapproved of poetry; and indeed it was one of the clauses of the *Carta Caritatis* that no Cistercian should compose verse. When Bernard wrote the office for St Victor's day, at the request of the Victorines of Paris, the hymns were purposely so composed that they would not scan, though they lent themselves to chanting<sup>2</sup>. Of him, as of St Francis, his biographer notes that he never laughed but by constraint; and he himself wrote to his former pupil, Pope Eugenius:

Jests—*nugae*—are but jests among worldly folk; in a priest's mouth they are blasphemies. It may sometimes be thy duty to bear with them if they befall thee, but never to repeat them. . . It is base to be moved to open laughter—*ad cachinnum*—and baser to move another thereunto<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A. Lecoy de la Marche, *L'Esprit de nos Aïeux*, p. 69. Caes. Heist. (II, 249) tells the same story of Richard Cœur de Lion, with a touch of special honour for the Cistercians: "O, when will the hour come when the Grey Monks are wont to rise and praise God? for I have heaped so many benefits upon them that, as soon as they begin to pray for me, God will doubtless have mercy upon us."

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 398, § 3. This subject of music and poetry is very fully treated by Vacandard, II, 103 ff. A General Chapter Act of 1199 prescribes: "Let monks who make verses—*rhythmos faciunt*—be banished to other abbeys" (*Nom. Cist.* p. 272).

<sup>3</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 306; *De Consid.* lib. II, c. 13; cf. Epp. 89, § 2, 340, §§ 1, 4; *De Praecepto*, c. 8, § 18.



Labour, too, had now again become a stern reality. One of the miraculous graces conferred on Bernard was in this field. He was distressed that his bodily weakness prevented his reaping with the rest in harvest; he prayed for strength sufficient unto that task, and it was granted for the occasion<sup>1</sup>. It was of this same bodily weakness that many of his sermons were born; that was his only way of sharing the general labour of the convent.

Next to his letters, these sermons do most to reveal his character; and of Clairvaux conventual life they tell us even more than the letters. Only fifteen sermons a year were prescribed to the abbot; but Bernard preached as often as he could find occasion. In the form in which we have these discourses, they were doubtless written down by the brethren with the help of the preacher's notes. A few exist also in French; it was once thought that these were delivered to the lay-brethren; but it is now generally admitted that they are almost contemporary translations from the Latin sermons. Some were delivered in the morning; for he breaks off at the hour of Mass, or for that field-labour which, in the few critical days of harvest, superseded Mass. Others were evidently in the evening, for he speaks of nightfall, and of guests arriving who demand the brethren's care. Indeed, the concluding sentences of several of St Bernard's sermons on the Cantic cast upon him and his hearers those undesigned cross-lights which are so precious in what they add to, or discount from, the formal biographies of a saint. The sermons themselves are among the most striking productions of medieval mysticism, in their whole-hearted acceptance of this oriental love-song as a story of Christ and the soul. "Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth; for thy breasts are better than wine. . . . Stay me up with flowers, compass me about with apples, because I languish with love"; the first fifty-one of St Bernard's sermons will show us how these amorous outcries may suffer a sea-change from earth to heaven<sup>2</sup>. But the cares of earth constantly called preacher and hearers, even at Clairvaux, down from the Holy Mount. Guests come suddenly, and:

Brethren, it is good for us to be here, but lo! this evil day calleth us away. . . . I will go forth unto the guests, lest anything be found lacking

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 240.

<sup>2</sup> This first verse, alone, is the theme for eight sermons (2-9): but there is no sensuousness in Bernard's exposition.

in that love whereof I am even now discoursing unto you; lest perchance it be said of us also "for they say, and do not"<sup>1</sup>.

Elsewhere, he complains still more pathetically of the impossibility of finding unbroken quiet for meditation. And he recognizes also the natural limitations of Brother Body. He has appealed passionately to his brethren: Can they trust in themselves alone, and work out unaided their own salvation?

Ye have done well to signify by that grunt—*grunniendo*—that this is not in your sense; nay, that ye are not so senseless, and that I need not labour so clear a point. But follow closely this next point. Or should I not rather pause here, for the sake of those who are drowsy among you? I had thought to expound in one single sermon that matter of Twofold Ignorance whereof I had promised to discourse; and I would have done so, were it not that this seemed too prolix unto those who are hard to please; for indeed I see some yawning, and some already asleep. No wonder; they are excused by the vigils of last night, which were most protracted. What shall I say, however, unto those who slept last night, and who sleep none the less now? But I will not farther prick them to shame; let it suffice to have touched the spot; methinks they will watch better in future, fearing to be branded with our observation.

There we touch the human side of what, at its greatest, was an almost superhuman effort to create a new world. And we shall least err if we take it at its greatest, and attempt to comprehend these men's real aim. Let us try, then, to look into that chapter-house, dim in its own dusk (for even the church itself had only five oil lamps to light it) and dimmer still through the mists of nearly eight centuries. Let us try to feel for a moment as those hearers might have felt, and to realize that this was truly

<sup>1</sup> Serm. 3, § 6; the other references are to 52 § 7, 36 § 7, 37 § 1. To listen in silence to a preacher was not a medieval convention; in the sermons of Berthold of Regensburg and St Bernardino of Siena we sometimes find a whole running fire of interruptions from the hearers and rejoinders from the preacher. In two other places St Bernard deals with similar expressions of feeling. Expounding a difficult passage of Origen, he suddenly breaks off: "What meaneth this unwonted *grunitus*, or who among you is murmuring vague disapproval?" (serm. 34, de diversis, § 1). And again, after pressing upon them a high ideal of brotherly love: "Wherefore have some of your faces fallen at these words? For your deep groans betray your sadness of soul and dejection of conscience" (*Serm. in Cant.* 49, § 7). Bourgain has collected other similar instances from monastic sermons of the twelfth century, pp. 23-4. For sleep at sermon see Caes. Heist. 1, 209: "Many, especially of the lay brethren, were asleep, and some were snoring. . . I myself was present at that sermon [of Abbot Gerard]."

a venture of faith for all. One of the worst vices of what may be called the plaster-saint school of history—a fault almost as fatal as its inveterate temptation to tamper with documents—is that it renders these very human men so unreal to us that we can scarcely profit by their example. Yet men of every creed, looking back, ought to hail these stern and patient reformers as victors in a great fight, however we may judge of the actual cause for which they fought. The meanest of them, as a rule, did something real, and something difficult, to overcome his own lower nature; yet even the best of them could not be absolutely assured of final victory. The most successful monk, except so far as he chose to deceive himself, felt the reality of St Paul's "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." The religious sentimentality which would persuade us to regard the victory of these canonized saints as a foregone conclusion, is as false and as foolish as the patriotism which preaches that we can never lose a war. Minstrels are very much at their ease (St Francis reminded his disciples) when they chant the deeds of Roland and Oliver; but the doing of those deeds was a far harder and more dangerous task<sup>1</sup>.

Caesarius of Heisterbach, in the third and fourth generations of Cistercianism, gives a long and motley list of the causes of conversion; to that we shall come later; but, even from the records of the first generation, we may see that conversions were already varied enough. There were men who had suffered a great moral shock, like that thief whom St Bernard begged from Thibaut of Champagne on his way to the gallows, promising that he would subject the man to a harder penance than hanging. There was the courtier who, in a vision, had seen his dead prince writhing in hell; there was the student who had the same ghastly ocular assurance with regard to his great teacher in the Schools. Most men had crept into Clairvaux out of the cold; chilled to the very marrow with the conviction of the world's wickedness and unfaith, and envisaging the cloister as the only certain refuge; here, side by side, they could keep each other warm in faith. Outside, even within the Catholic fold, "rotteness and corruption spreads in these days of ours throughout the whole body...the wound [of the Church] is inward and in-

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Perf.* c. 4.

curable"<sup>1</sup>. Grosseteste will say practically the same, or stronger still, before the Council of Lyons in 1245; two centuries later, the greatest churchman of his century will echo it again: "The church is wasted with an incurable cancer, and the remedies do but make her worse"<sup>2</sup>. Who can be safe in a world like this? and what wise man can fail to see that the only prudent speculation is to quit it once for all? Conversion, therefore, is prudence. But there were others, we must remember, who had not chosen the cloister merely as the end of such a process of exhaustive induction. Some had possessed a plenitude of love and power, yet these things had not palled upon them; possessing and enjoying still, they might have gone on unsated to the very end; but here in Clairvaux they recognized an even subtler beauty, a more compelling power; and here they fixed their deliberate choice: *haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi*<sup>3</sup>. It was like the gospel-net, bringing in small and great; if we ourselves, we of today, had come within that influence, some at least would have been caught in; those, perhaps, who would least have expected it and of whom it could least have been expected. Henry of France was a spoilt child of fortune; though as yet only a sub-deacon, he held an archdeaconry and four great abbacies, for he was son to the reigning king. He came to St Bernard on worldly business, with an able business-man in his train, Andrew the clerk; once at Clairvaux, it seemed worth while to look round the abbey and commend himself to the prayers of the brethren.

The holy Father, among other words of exhortation, said unto him: "I am confident that thou wilt not die in thy present state, but that thou shalt soon find by thine own experience how great is the profit from those prayers for which thou hast asked." To the amazement of many men, this was fulfilled that same day, and the whole convent was filled with joy at the conversion of this young prince. Meanwhile, his companions and his whole train lamented as though they saw him dead; and, above all, a certain Andrew of Paris cried aloud upon Henry as drunken or mad, sparing neither insult nor blasphemy. Henry, for his part, besought the Man of God to labour more especially for Andrew's conversion. The Saint, in the hearing of many, made answer: "Leave the man to himself; his mind is now in bitterness; yet be not greatly solicitous on his account, for he is thine." Then

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. in Cant.* 33, § 15; cf. *De Convers.* c. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Gerson, *Opp.* 1606, vol. II, col. 556 a.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxxxi, 14, Vulg.: cf. Bernard, *Epp.* 66, § 2; 112, § 3.

Henry conceived a greater hope, and was urgent that he should speak unto Andrew; but the Saint said, looking more severely upon the prince: "What is this? Have I not already said that he is thine?" Andrew hearing this (for he also stood by), being a very obstinate man and filled with loathing for our holy conversation, thought thus silently within himself, as he telleth even to this day: "Now I know thee hereby to be a false prophet; henceforward I will not spare to cast this in thy teeth before the King and his princes and in full congregation, that thy falsehood may be known to all men." Yet how wonderful is God in His counsels, above the sons of men, laughing at their vain struggles, and fulfilling His own purpose when and how He will! Next day, Andrew rode away, invoking every curse upon that Clairvaux wherein he left his lord, and wishing that the valley itself might be swallowed up whole with all that dwelt therein. Nay, those who had heard the Saint's words concerning him were no little moved and astonished when they saw him depart in this spirit. But God did not suffer their weakness and their little faith to be long put to the proof. For Andrew rode forth that one day, fighting as it were against God's grace; but, when night came, conquered and as it were bound in chains—*victus et quasi victus*—by the violence of that Holy Ghost who drew him, he could not wait for the day, but, rising before dawn, and hastening back to Clairvaux, he showed us a second Saul—or, rather, a second Paul in his conversion<sup>1</sup>.

Within a few months of this event, we find Eugenius III writing to Louis VII: "Thy brother Henry, sprung from so ancient a line of kings, has taken the cowl and washes the dishes at Clairvaux."

There were many, of course, with whom Bernard himself failed; but a more solemn atmosphere of impending judgement was felt to hang about these cases. The monk was always tempted to magnify the sin of retractation in a novice, or to make mere infirmity into sin; but a novice who had fallen away from St Bernard was felt to have done direct violence to the Holy Spirit of God: still more, one who had actually put his hand to the plough. William of St-Thierry tells us of two such, and of one's latter end<sup>2</sup>.

I saw him afterwards in the world, a vagabond and a fugitive from the face of the Lord like unto Cain; a man of great humility, so far

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 330. The next story, telling how Bernard dispersed the gloom that hung over the saintly Geoffroi de Péronne at his first conversion, is almost equally striking.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 236.

as I could see, and miserable in his confusion, but too faint of heart. Yet in his last days he came back to Clairvaux, under compulsion of poverty and infirmity; a man of noble birth, but cast forth by all his kinsfolk and acquaintance. There he renounced his property, yet not altogether his self-will; and he died, not as a brother within that home, but at the gates, praying for mercy as a poor mendicant.

But such backslidings in an actual monk of Clairvaux, even such partial backslidings as this, were almost unheard of. The chroniclers could truly boast of their brethren that, numerous as they were and divers as their paths had been, when once they were settled in Clairvaux "the multitude of them were of one mind and one heart"<sup>1</sup>. Doubtless St Bernard's keen eye was on them from the very first; in all soundly-conducted novice-rooms, the difficulties of the Rule were always plainly exposed, and even exaggerated, for a full test of resolution and constancy: no doubt many slipped out, and a few were quietly eliminated, before the time came for the final vow. But that vow, once taken, was kept in earnest. St Bernard showed scant sympathy with those who hoped to jog quietly onward to salvation; "far from me" (he protests in Ep. 91) "be those who say 'we will not be better than our fathers.'" With him, they must not settle down but go on from strength to strength, however difficult the progress may be; for "it is far easier to find many layfolk converted to good, than to find one monk passing from good to better"<sup>2</sup>. Therefore Bernard never sank into the difficulties which beset even so great a man as Samson of St Edmundsbury—as it is most instructive to compare an average well-conducted house such as Jocelin reveals to us, with the missionary fervour which reigned in the first Cistercian generation. Samson (this intimate biographer tells us), was wont to groan on his couch for the trouble that he had with his subordinates, and the cares of office blanched his hair to snow. The monks of St Edmund were respectable; but they hated, with the bitter hatred of mediocrity, all that was more than respectable; it repented them to have helped to choose a great man for their ruler. One brother would say: "May the Lord Almighty give us a foolish and unlearned person for our [next] abbot, that he may be compelled to lean on us for help!"

<sup>1</sup> The one really striking exception, Secretary Nicholas, has already been mentioned.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 96.

another: "Mine own counsel will be, if I live [to see another vacancy], that we chose some one who is no very good monk, no very wise clerk; nor, on the other hand, one too unlearned or too dissolute"<sup>1</sup>. Samson was evidently in the minority at Bury; even Jocelin practically confesses that he himself would have been content with a less efficient abbot. But of Bernard it is equally evident that he carried the overwhelming majority with him at Clairvaux. What made this possible, was his own compelling love; Dante's *amor, che a nullo amato amar perdona*. His worst trials were in his frequent absences from his brethren, his children, whom God had given him. His letters are full of this.

If ye suffer from my absence, think how I must suffer; for ye lack only my single presence, but I lack you all (Ep. 143). My longing on my pilgrimage is to see the holy temple of God, which ye are (*ibid.*). My little ones are weaned before the time; I am not suffered to bring up those babes whom I brought to birth in the Gospel (*ibid.*).

He fulfilled, more truly than any other Benedictine of whom we have record, that precept from the 2nd chapter of St Benedict's Rule:

The Abbot ought always to suit his deeds to the greatness of his name; for he is held to take Christ's place in the monastery, when he is called by His name, as St Paul saith: *You have received the Spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry: Abba, Father.*

Those who had known him could thenceforward describe their religious conviction in concrete terms: "that which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled." The path might be narrow and steep; but "to whom shall we go?" Clairvaux was their home not only from necessity but from passionate daily choice; *haec requies mea in saeculum saeculi*; and among the most pathetic touches in the early records are the indications of what we may call this *nostalgia Claravallensis*. Hundreds went forth to found fresh houses, but all, if they could, would have died at Clairvaux. An old knight, Henry of Coutances, had been sent out with others to a colony in Normandy; after a while he felt his forces failing, and prayed for recall, that he might be buried in his spiritual home, in this Burgundian cloister where he had taken his first vows. Bernard's brother Guy, who himself had been a knight, was then "provisor," or steward, of Clair-

<sup>1</sup> Jocelin of Brakelond, C.S. pp. 10, 11; cf. 26.

vaux. He refused to transport the old man on the score of expense; and St Bernard, when he heard of the incident, spoke his indignation plainly.

Hast thou more care for our money or our beasts than for thy brethren? Seeing therefore that thou wouldst not suffer our brethren to rest by our side in this valley, thou thyself also shalt find thy last rest elsewhere<sup>1</sup>.

So Guy died at Pontigny, far from that valley which in old days had been called *The Valley of Wormwood*, which Bernard had humanized and civilized, and which even today, in spite of later associations, has lost none of that mingled beauty of forest and tilled field. To Bernard himself, this house was what the Portiuncula was to St Francis; and he writes in one of his letters (144): "My prayer to God is, that mine eyes may be closed by the hands of my children, and that my poor body may be laid at Clairvaux side by side with the bodies of the poor."

For, here, all his human affections were interwoven with his higher faith. Few men doubted, in his day, that monachism was *the* heavenly way. The common word for a monastic Order was *Religio*, and the ordinary sense of *Conversio*, even in Canon Law, was "taking the monastic vows"; it may safely be said that medieval writers use it half a dozen times in this sense for once that they use it in Wesley's sense. And though Bernard, like most good men, may have shrunk from any temptation to regard his own salvation as assured, yet he had no doubts for all his brethren who remained loyal to the spirit of their conversion. He shows no trace, I believe, of the gross but very widespread superstition which regarded the frock and cowl as an all but impenetrable armour against Satan; his confidence was based on the belief that monastic life was the true Gospel life, the real narrow way.

You ask me about brother Guerricus [a recent convert]. He so runneth, not as at an uncertainty; so fighteth he, not as one beating the air; nevertheless, knowing well that it is neither of him that fighteth nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy, he beseecheth thy prayers on his behalf, that He who hath already given him grace to fight and run, may grant also that he may conquer and attain<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 421: cf. 528, and Caes. Heist. I, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 90, § 2.



If Bernard sometimes expresses that "assurance of personal salvation" which Newman somewhere speaks of as characteristic of post-medieval Puritanism, it is because he had a good conscience and a truly filial trust in God. "The elect . . . is initiated, and is carried forward; shall he despair only of the consummation of his bliss?" And again writing to a nun, he bids her answer the scoffs of worldlings with Pauline confidence: "My glory is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ, my life, shall appear, then shall I also appear with Him in glory." "Let no man who now loves [God] disbelieve that he himself is beloved . . . we hold a double proof of our salvation"<sup>1</sup>. And his confidence is increased by the sense of new life in this new Order; he swims on the rising tide of the Cistercian reform. "It is indeed as though that tree, whereon the Lord of Glory hung, had now shot forth new buds . . . It is He Himself who gathers you, as the most precious fruit of His cross"<sup>2</sup>. It was in this intimate alliance of spiritual exaltation with active life that St Bernard, and others with him, found their real liberation from the formalized demonology of the Middle Ages. On the one hand, they would never deny, and sometimes they would even consider with involuntary horror, the pains of hell, the nearness of hell to all men, and the actual dominion of hell over the unredeemed multitude. But they deliberately fixed their gaze, as the good men of all ages have done, rather upwards than downwards. These horrors (they would have said) are undeniable; but what matters to us is, that we have a power of putting them under our feet—a choice, a freedom of the will, by which most men live instinctively even when they argue against it. Bernard's thoughts, therefore, are concentrated not on the awful contingencies which speculation might reveal, but on the felt sense of sonship to God, and of a possible reward far beyond his deserts. He is keenly conscious of the Pauline and Augustinian antithesis, of the greatness and the littleness of man; but it is on our greatness that he will dwell, and, by contemplation, help to realize that which he contemplates.

Soul of man, whence hast thou this? Whence hast thou this inestimable glory, that thou hast earned the place of spouse to Him on

<sup>1</sup> Epp. 107, § 5; 113, § 2; 107, § 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 109, § 1.

whom the angels desire to look? . . . What shall I render unto the Lord, for all the things that he hath rendered to me<sup>1</sup>?

But the most striking act of Bernard's faith is recounted in one of his early biographies. A monk of Clairvaux, unable to believe in the Real Presence, had yet enough faith to be convinced that he would be damned for unbelief. St Bernard's attitude was uncompromising: "What! a monk of mine go down to hell? God forbid!" Then, to the poor doubter himself

he said not: "Hence, heretic!—begone, thou damned soul!—away with thee, lost wretch!"—but commanded boldly: "Go and take the Holy Communion with *my* faith!" . . . The monk, therefore, constrained by the virtue of obedience, though (as to himself it seemed) utterly without faith, came before the altar and communicated; whereupon, being straightway enlightened by the Holy Father's merit, he received a faith in the Sacraments which he kept unspotted even to the day of his death<sup>2</sup>.

Such, then, was Bernard's audience at these sermons; such was his attitude towards them; and his themes were in natural harmony with that mutual relation. To questions of conduct he applies the exactest rule of reason; on strictly religious topics he speaks the language of exhortation or of mystic contemplation. His most elaborate homilies—that course of sermons on the Canticle which was interrupted by his death—though they contain some of his directest satire, deal mainly with mystic exposition; the story is that of Christ and His Bride the Church, or of the excellence of Mary. The Rose of Sharon, the Tower of Ivory, the Garden Enclosed—*hortus inclusus*—recur and recur with those mystic implications whose haunting memories Renan describes from his own seminary days<sup>3</sup>. But a great part of the sermons is strictly practical, as from an abbot to his spiritual children, for whose souls he must some day render a strict and solemn account. One theme is the evil world; evil even in the Church of Christ; the city, with all its boasted civilization, is a mere prison; the cloister is your only heaven on earth<sup>4</sup>. Yet the cloister is but what we ourselves make of it; no vow will save us the labour of working out our own salvation; if, under the

<sup>1</sup> Serm. 2, post. oct. Epiphan. § 3.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 419: the anecdote is translated in full in *Med. Garner*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, 1883, p. 227.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. 178; *Serm. in Cant.* 33, § 15; Ep. 365, § 1.

cowl, we do not bear the true monastic heart, then we are of all men most miserable.

Such men labour with Christ, but with Christ they shall not reign; they follow Him in His poverty, yet they shall not be with Him in His glory; they drink of the brook by the way, but shall never lift up their heads in heaven; they mourn now, yet shall they not be comforted<sup>1</sup>.

The way is rough; but we must look for no relief from creature-comforts.

Thou pleadest... "cheese burdens my stomach; milk gives me a headache; my chest suffereth not that I drink mere water; cabbages foster melancholy and leeks breed bile; fishes from a pond or muddy stream are utterly unprofitable to a man of my complexion." Here, brother, is no question of thy complexion, but of thy profession; thou art not a physician, but a monk<sup>2</sup>.

Worse still must be our spiritual trials; it is the good, above all others, whom Satan tempts in the form of an angel of light; the Virgin Mary herself had reason to suspect, for a while, lest the divine message might have been one of these glorious but fatal lies; this is the *daemonium meridianum*, the Tempter disguised as an Angel of Light, who sometimes deceives even the elect<sup>3</sup>. And this our fight, bodily and spiritual, is life-long; your abbot, like his master Christ, tolerates no shirking of responsibility. "Can a Christian, before the hour of his death, cast off the obedience once laid upon him? Was not Christ our Master made obedient to his Father unto the death?"<sup>4</sup> There was felt to be a sacramental significance in one of Bernard's acted parables, when he came into the novice-room at meal-time, followed by a lay-brother bearing a great basket filled with slices of cheese, from which the abbot gave to each of the novices, saying as he distributed them: "Eat now, brother, for thou hast a long way yet before thee"<sup>5</sup>. Neither there nor at any other time did he disguise the difficulties, but his faith trod them down; *plures cum nobis*; "they that be with us are more than they that be with them"<sup>6</sup>: the mountain is full of horses and chariots of fire round about us.

Nor did he disguise his own temptations and weaknesses. "Oftentimes, in the early days of my conversion, my heart was

<sup>1</sup> *Apol. ad Gul.* c. 1, § 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Serm. in Cant.* 31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 33, § 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Ep.* 87.

<sup>5</sup> *P.L.* vol. 185, col. 450.

<sup>6</sup> *Ep.* 2, § 12.

dried up and withered within me"; it was frozen, and the spring tarried long; "more and more it languished, and weariness came upon me, and my soul slept in weariness, sad almost to despair, and murmuring to itself: *Who shall stand before the face of His cold?*"<sup>1</sup> He was long haunted by the face of a girl upon whom he had gazed too long and fondly before his conversion. As his own physical strength decreased, the burden of his care for others grew heavier and heavier: he besought them to spare him, yet was forced, in the next breath, to retract that cry of self-defence, lest one of the weaker brethren, in his fear of troubling me, should dissemble his own needs beyond his powers of endurance... I will not use my privilege of retiring into myself; rather, let them use me as they will, so only that they come to salvation.

His work left him no moment of freedom; yet in work was his remedy; work, even when it took him away from Mass, or when manual labour called him away from his book. He frankly recognized the dignity even of worldly business; let the monk, entrenched in his spiritual fortress, do full justice to those secular clergy who risk their souls outside in grappling with the world's work<sup>2</sup>. He exacted the utmost from others and from himself; until, as we have seen, he found himself reduced to the last humiliation of eating delicacies in the infirmary by command of his superior abbot of Cîteaux.

This, perhaps, is the most pathetic of all the stories told about the saint; it is far more significant than the derogatory tales recorded by Walter Map, who intensely disliked the Cistercians. However much importance we may attach to Map's evidence, and however we may emphasize other weaknesses which for proportion's sake, and therefore for the sake of general truth, I have not dwelt upon in this necessarily brief sketch of Bernard the monk, the final picture must be that of a man of rare virtue and distinction, whose devotion will be honestly admired by those who least share his religious ideal. And, if his body broke down under the unfair strain which he laid upon it, this in itself is among the noblest of infirmities. Can any man justly blame

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. in Cant.* 14, § 6; cf. *ibid.* 30, § 6. The quotation is from Ps. cxlvii, 17, Vulg.

*Serm. in Cant.* 52, § 7; 50, § 5; 12, § 9.

the ascetic but those (if those there be) who have tried such self-subjugation, and stopped short at the exact point at which protest came no longer from the body but from the spirit? The world will always respect the scars of self-denial as it respects those of the soldier; and few men have had a better right than Bernard to plead St Paul's words: "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

## CHAPTER XX

### THE CISTERCIAN IDEAL

IF, however, personal criticism of St Bernard is disarmed by his sufferings, and by his unremitting thought for others down to his last sickness, yet this should not forbid our criticism of his ideal. On the contrary, the greater our admiration for his person, the more inevitably we turn to compare his life-story with the history of his foundation—for he, as we have seen, was the main founder of Cistercianism. Why could not this greatest of all Benedictines bring the generality of Benedictine society back to the real Rule?

The failure, in itself, is frankly confessed by contemporaries, and is disguised only by modern apologists who ignore contemporary evidence<sup>1</sup>. We may account for it partly by natural reaction; Bernard, it may be said, demanded too much from himself and from his brethren; he would have got more if he had asked for less, and civilization would have been better served. There is a certain amount of truth in this, and it is recognized by medieval monastic disciplinarians themselves, naturally as they shrink from the farther conclusions which we may be tempted to draw. The author of the *Exordium Magnum* notes the difficulty of preventing each new generation of monks from starting on the lower plane of self-denial at which their predecessors, worn out by a life of asceticism, had finished. Again, he emphasizes the almost impossibility of calling a community back from relaxations once permitted; this, like many other great and beneficent institutions, was actually founded on an inclined plane, and was therefore subject to a natural decline from century to century, in spite of occasional revivals<sup>2</sup>. And St Bonaventura bears the same witness with regard to his brother-friars, when their founder was dead and their Order had become a great European institution. It would be inhuman, he says, not to

<sup>1</sup> I hope, as has been already said, to devote a whole sub-section of my forthcoming collection of documents to this evidence, in chronological order, down to the Dissolution.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 1116.

permit considerable relaxations to the aged and broken-down friars; but then

they are no longer able to set an example as of old; and the young friars, who never saw their real work, imitate them only in what they now see in them, and become remiss, and spare their own bodies under the excuse of discretion, lest they should ruin their health as the old friars did.

The older friars fear to correct this, lest the younger should retort, "Your words are good enough, but your deeds do not bear them out."

Therefore, when these younger men come to rule in the Order, they bring up the next generation in their own likeness, so that the early friars are now become a laughing-stock, rather than a model for the rest<sup>1</sup>.

"Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien": there was less discretion in Bernard than in Benedict, and therefore his work was less durable. But was St Benedict's own work, wonderfully as it stood the test of time, guided by perfect discretion?

"Time, the devourer of all things, deadeneth even monastic religion, since mankind is more prone to imitate vice than virtue"<sup>2</sup>. So wrote the chronicler of the *Exordium Magnum* in about 1200 A.D.; but we, while admitting his facts, shall hardly accept his explanation. One of the most decisive social gains since the Middle Ages is the gradual decline of that pessimism which saw little hope but in the speedy coming of Antichrist, and Armageddon, and the end of all created things. We believe in the gradual perfectibility of human nature; and, though our temptation may be to take this belief too easily, that is at least a nobler error than to make it a point of faith that man is more prone to vice than to virtue. If monachism in general failed to satisfy the best minds even in 1200, and has since lost ground steadily with the large majority of thinking people, we must seek the causes of failure not in human nature, but in the nature of this institution which fails to satisfy the legitimate demands of humanity.

That is the key to the revival which we connect with the names of Francis and Dominic. If, a century after St Bernard, it

<sup>1</sup> *Quaestiones circa Regulam*, quaest. 19; cf. also quaestt. 8 and 9.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 452.

needed a greater than he to institute reforms which rather superseded than recalled true Benedictinism, then the fault was not in Bernard but in the system. Not but that the earlier monastic leaders, and the best of their followers, had shown as fine qualities as any that we can trace in history; but there was something in the ideal itself which the later Middle Ages were outgrowing. The inmost core of St Benedict's Rule is suited to every age; we can scarcely conceive a society in which a few groups, here and there, might not find profit in his type of celibate common life, devoted to a high ideal and controlled in details by sound common-sense. But as a world-institution, richly endowed in lands and rents, and even richer in the prestige of its spiritual past, built upon the conservative instincts of an uneducated population which regarded monachism as an apostolic ordinance, coeval with and inseparable from the Christian church—as an institution of that kind, monachism was beginning to outlive its day; and not even those eight great revivals of 1020–1120 could save it from decadence. What was mainly wrong with it was that tinge of “holy boorishness” which it had partly inherited from the anchorites of the desert, and partly been forced into by the corruption and turbulence of Western society in those centuries from which the monks took their character<sup>1</sup>. Incidentally, the monk did a great deal of good in the world, even directly; but his primary object was, confessedly, to save his own soul by retiring from the world; we have seen this already, and shall see it again. Therefore men like St Bernard, overflowing with the milk of human kindness, had to force themselves to be less generally sociable than society would have desired of them. Bernard did, indeed, constantly mix with the outer world, but most reluctantly, and only because the world could not do without him. And to a little extent even in him—far more clearly, therefore, in inferior saints—we may trace this tendency to puritanical aloofness which was very strong indeed in certain quarters of the medieval church, and especially among cloisterers of all Orders—for even the friars often fell back into it<sup>2</sup>. One

<sup>1</sup> “*Sancta rusticitas solum sibi prodest.*” Jerome, *Ad Paulinum*, § 3. P.L. vol. 22, col. 542. The Friars were wont to quote this text against the older Orders.

<sup>2</sup> See the 4th of my *Medieval Studies: The High Ancestry of Puritanism*.



remarkable dialogue is reported to have taken place between the late cardinals Manning and Vaughan. The latter, aristocratic by birth and imposing in manner, remarked once with just a tinge of religious superiority: "The natural man in me has no love of the world." To which the full-blooded cardinal instantly retorted: "So God loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son—." We must not thus array Bernard and Francis personally against each other; but we may fairly put the average monk here in Vaughan's place, and the average friar in Manning's.

As we need to understand the strict Benedictine ideal in order to realize how good a monk St Bernard was, so also we need to mark how closely St Bernard felt bound to follow the Rule, in order to understand that problem which Benedict had set to the Western Church, and which Bernard re-stated in all its original force. The essential points of this problem come out the more clearly, the better we bear in mind the latter saint's natural breadth of view, common-sense, charity, and sense of humour.

I have had occasion more than once to emphasize the puritanical side of medieval monasticism, and here, again, we must return to this subject, since it lends itself, perhaps, to more misconceptions than almost any other. A modern author of repute can even write: "The monk, it must be remembered, was in no sense 'a gloomy person.' . . . In fact, the true religious was told to try and possess 'angelica hilaritas cum monastica simplicitas' "<sup>1</sup>. The monastic moralist of the Middle Ages would have repudiated the sentiment of this first clause as vehemently as he would have rejected the Latinity of the second. Modern apologists are fatally hypnotized by the monastic life of their own day; and their strangest mis-statements are often due not to perversity, but to an ignorance which is serenely ignorant of itself, and which even the critical outsider can fathom only at the expense of much laborious verification of references. There is no corner of Christendom where the present church buildings are so inartistic, in general, as in Tyrol and S. Italy, where they have been in uninterrupted Catholic occupation since the days when Catholic art was at its highest level. Similarly, on many points

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Gasquet, *English Monastic Life*, p. 146.

of medieval history, none are so complacently blind as those who can boast an outward continuity of tenure, and who therefore regard the past uncritically through their modern ecclesiastical spectacles, dispensing themselves from documentary research because they trust in the living oracle at their door. The truth is that the very vitality of Catholic traditions, so far as they are still vital, has constantly shown itself in change. The Tyrolese and Italian churches have been held by generation after generation of worshippers, in whom the sense of present useful possession has outweighed—and, on the whole, has justly outweighed—the antiquarian sense of responsibility to a far-off past. Those buildings have been knocked about and beplastered and Jesuitized, because the Jesuits and their pupils for a while were the living teachers in them. Thus, again, modern monasticism shows some real vitality in its frank neglect of many among its most ancient traditions; and the pressure of outer society has changed it even more, perhaps, than any purely internal evolution. Monks are very few now, scattered among not very sympathetic populations; they live under a glare of publicity and a pressure of public opinion not only far more exacting than any in the Middle Ages, but far more powerful to enforce actual obedience upon those from whom it exacts it theoretically. The modern monk lives under severe religious competition; “by their fruits ye shall know them”; he cannot afford to answer this test less successfully than Anglican or Wesleyan, Christian Scientist or Agnostic. Thus, the pressure of outside opinion relieves the strain on many of the disciplinary clauses of the Rule. St Benedict, for instance, instituted something like strict vegetarianism as a moral safeguard; the modern monk can be trusted by his superiors to eat meat like other people. Again, he no longer even pretends to labour in the field like his predecessors; and so it is with many other early provisions which, side by side with their modern modifications, are alluded to in chapter xviii of Abbot Butler’s *Benedictine Monachism*. And not only is the modern monk thus more sheltered by social laws than his ancestor, but he is better sifted by natural selection. In the days when warfare was not occasional but chronic—with constant private warfare even at times of international peace—when a saint like Bernard could say even of his own Church that “her wound is inward and in-

curable"<sup>1</sup>—thousands of men and women pressed indiscriminately into the cloister as their only possible refuge. Thither (quite apart from the motley crowd of unreal converts to which Caesarius will presently introduce us) came men who found the world too hard, and who sickened of the intolerable choice between slavery and rebellion: they steered for an ideal haven, as an Italian of the Risorgimento put it, *dove non son nè schiavi, nè risorti*. Thither came ladies (for the lower classes, as a rule, had no such commodious refuge) who were liable to be bought and sold with their lands; who in their own houses could not secure what we now consider the decencies of civilized life, but were subject to brutalities not only in thought and speech but in deed; who, again, outside their homes, were too often dependent for the sacraments of the church upon a priest with whom no self-respecting woman could be seen talking alone<sup>2</sup>. Many more, both men and women, came in by no choice of their own, but by parental compulsion. Among these ill-assorted communities, even the *tria substantialia* of Poverty, Obedience and Chastity could be maintained only by strict attention to minor precepts; on that point medieval disciplinarians are untiring, emphatic and unanimous; and St Bernard would not have been more incapable of forecasting a world given over to Protestantism, than of anticipating an age of monasticism in which the *tria substantialia* no longer needed the regular and immemorial safeguards of labour and abstinence from meat, claustration and moneylessness and silence. The only monk with whom Bernard had to deal lived in a far harder world than ours; without were fightings, within were fears. Monasticism was what St Benedict had called it, a warfare; the monk must strike hard, and it was not easy to do so with a smiling face; in the scores of surviving medieval disciplinarian treatises, the model monk is a puritan. Even Francis never laughed outright; to Bernard, as we have seen, monastic merriment was what Dr Johnson would have called "mighty offensive": "*foede in cachinnum moveris, foedius moves*." We have seen how Bernard loved to echo from Jerome *monachi non docentis sed plangentis est officium*; the cloisterer helps his brother-man not directly but by his ascetic example. Bernard's *angelica hilaritas* differed not in nature and

<sup>1</sup> *Serm. in Cant.* 33.

<sup>2</sup> See *From St Francis to Dante*, chap. xxiii.

perhaps not even in degree, from the serenity of all men who, through very different outward expressions of faith, have reached a deep inward calm. With Baxter or Bunyan, John Newton or Jonathan Edwards, we can imagine an intimate friend recording some such flash of splendid sunlight as we find in the casual words of one who visited Bernard in his mean cell at Clairvaux,

like unto a leper's hut at the crossways... And when he in his turn had welcomed us joyously, and we began to ask how he fared, he smiled upon us with that generous smile of his, and said "Most excellently" —*modo illo suo generoso arridens nobis*: "*Optime*," inquit<sup>1</sup>.

There we have the peace of God that passeth all understanding, worthy of reverence wheresoever we meet with it, but not confined to any single creed. The time is long past for supporting any form of Christianity on a foundation of historical disguise; it was past even when Newman wrote. Feeling that some men might resent, in 1873, his republication of historical studies written in his Anglican days, he added a word of justification in his Preface:

Nor is this the sole consideration, on which an author may be justified in the use of frankness, after the manner of Scripture, in speaking of the Saints; for their lingering imperfections surely make us love them more, without leading us to reverence them less, and act as a relief to the discouragement and despondency which may come over those, who, in the midst of much error and sin, are striving to imitate them; —according to the saying of St Gregory on a graver occasion, "*Plus nobis Thomæ infidelitas ad fidem, quam fides credentium discipulorum profuit*"<sup>2</sup>.

A learned and very honourable theologian of our own day remarked once, after reading a volume of historical criticism which tended too much towards iconoclasm: "That book has shattered my ideal." So Jerome wrote when Alaric had sacked the Eternal City: "When Rome perishes, who is safe?" But with Jerome this was a passing weakness; and to Augustine the fall of Rome pointed the way towards greater eternities. The earthly city may perish; "Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen"; but the Heavenly City is imperishable; the unseen good shall, in the long run, triumph over the too obvious evil; there remaineth a sabbath-

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 246.

<sup>2</sup> *Historical Sketches*, vol. III, advt. p. xii.

rest for the people of God. That book of Augustine's was perhaps the earliest philosophy of history, as it still remains, in essence, the truest. Our noblest energies are not numbed, but stimulated, by even the coldest truth; the atheist Leopardi was as momentarily untrue to his best self as Jerome was when he gave way beneath the shock of unwelcome facts<sup>1</sup>. If we can no longer believe that our ideal has been, we may at least reply that it shall be; it may not have been our actual starting-point, but at least it shall be our goal; there remaineth therefore a sabbath-rest for the people of God.

For Benedictinism, as for his own person, St Bernard would no more resent fair criticism now than he feared it in his lifetime. If he had been born with us, there is much in modern life which he would most heartily have welcomed. He would have had scant sympathy with the attempt to prejudge deep religious questions by superficial appeals to sentimentality or to artistic preferences. The principles on which he adopted and defended monachism were very different from those on which we are often asked nowadays to regret the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The empty rhetoric and sentimentality which fills a book like Mr Ralph Adam Cram's *Ruined Abbeys of Great Britain* would have been as abhorrent to him, in its own way, as even Abailard's doctrines were. To realize this, it is only necessary to read his *Letter to Abbot Guillaume de St-Thierry*<sup>2</sup>. Brother Giles, one of St Francis's closest disciples, boldly rebuked a fellow-friar who complained of unjust banishment: "Who can banish a friar, whose home is always in heaven?" St Bernard, in the same spirit, would have repudiated the essential irreligion of those who ask us to condemn the religious revolution of the sixteenth century because it destroyed even more medieval art, perhaps, than has been destroyed among orthodox populations by Jesuit and rococo rebuilders. Splendid churches were as alien to Benedict's ideal as to that of any other great religious reformer; and Bernard was in deadly earnest to bring monachism back to the Benedictine ideal. Therefore, as many over-enthusiastic Mary-worshippers

<sup>1</sup> "E, con la vista impura, L'infausta verità" (*Risorgimento*). Compare De Musset's sonnet: "J'ai perdu la force et la vie, etc."

<sup>2</sup> This is unfortunately among those not translated by Eales; the pertinent portions are translated on pp. 68 ff. of my *Med. Garner*.

of the later Middle Ages were tempted to undervalue this man who had written against the Feast of the Conception, so the modern romantic medievalist is often less than just to a reformer who, it is plainly hinted, showed a definite taint of puritanical pharisaism. Was not the ideal cloisterer to be found less among the Cistercians than in the monk of Cluny, with his greater dignity and *savoir-vivre*, and his wider services to art? For, though Cluny also began in great simplicity, yet it soon blossomed out into a great artistic school; and, beautiful as Cistercian art became also, this was always due rather to the layman who worked on the church than to the General Chapter of Cîteaux itself, which strove for generations, until the cause had become too evidently hopeless, to maintain the puritanic plainness prescribed by the first founders<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For Cistercian art, see M. Lucien Bégule's admirable monograph *L'Abbaye de Fontenay* (Paris, Laurens, about 3 f.) and E. Sharpe, *Cistercian Architecture* (1874). It is only in a certain sense, however, that we can speak of a Cistercian school of art; so far as this Order shows separate characteristics these are due to the influence of conscious restraint and simplicity upon the ordinary Burgundian school of Gothic architecture. Enlart puts it admirably: St Bernard insisted on the puritanical side, but the contrary impulse was too strong, and "de cette doctrine excessive il ne resta qu'une certaine simplicité de bon goût que l'on pourrait considérer comme un raffinement de plus" (*Manuel d'Archéologie française*, I, 1902, 202). Cf. Sharpe, *l.c.* pt I, p. 13: "We find in none of the Abbey Churches of this Order the representation of a human head or figure carved in stone." Sir T. G. Jackson, in *Medieval France* (Camb. 1922, p. 343) seems greatly to overestimate the proportion of monastic to lay workmen, even for that Romanesque period of which he is speaking for the moment; I deal with this subject in my second volume.

## CHAPTER XXI

### CISTERCIANS AND CLUNIACS

HERE, then, we must pause for a moment to consider what the Cistercian reform really amounted to; only thus can we understand the vivid picture of Cistercian life which we get from the records of the next few generations. How far did Bernard unintentionally exaggerate? and how far are certain modern writers justified in accusing the first Cistercians of pharisaism? The question must be kept strictly apart from the accusations of satirists like Walter Map, who wrote when the Order was already wealthy, under cover of its profession of poverty. For the earliest period of all, Bernard's period, we have quite other evidence, direct and fairly cogent.

Let us first note that Ordericus Vitalis, though his attachment to the ordinary Benedictine tradition makes him naturally critical of the new Orders, is on the whole distinctly favourable to the Cistercians. The conservatives, the Black Monks of St Benedict, as they have since loved to call themselves, were often openly unfriendly to these "new Pharisees," who advertised their poverty by wearing undyed wool, and were therefore often called by the name of Grey or White monks. The author of the *Exordium Magnum* tells us that he has laboured to collect these six books of early anecdotes

in order that we might remove all occasion of calumny from these Black Monks, who slander our Order in the ears of seculars and ignorant folk, saying that we began in presumption, and that our fathers who first went forth from Molesme did so without leave of their abbot.

Ordericus does not fall under this condemnation. True, he describes them as "resolving to keep the Rule of St Benedict exactly to the letter, as the Jews did with the law of Moses" (640 b); but he continues:

It is now nearly 37 years since abbot Robert founded Cîteaux; and, in this short time, so great a multitude of men has flocked to this Order that 65 abbeys have arisen... All dispense with drawers and

fur cloaks, abstain from flesh food and animal fats, and shine with many good deeds, as lanterns in a dark place. . . Many noble fighters and profound philosophers have flocked unto them for their new and singular life; and, willingly embracing this unusual strictness, they have gladly raised hymns of joy to Christ, walking in the right way . . . Many thirsty folk have drawn from their spring, and many streams have been led thence to divers regions of Gaul. Rivals to this new institution have been scattered through Aquitaine, Brittany, Gascony and Ireland. Hypocrites walk among the good, clad in white or party-coloured garments, deluding men and offering a wondrous spectacle to the people. Many strive to imitate the true worshippers of God in outward show rather than in virtue; these, by their very multitude, beget weariness in the beholders, and, in so far as man's deceptive sight reaches, they render the approved cenobites more despicable.

There can be little doubt, from an abundance of other evidence, that Ordericus here voices pretty accurately, on both sides, the judgement of temperate observers<sup>1</sup>.

This, then, may prepare us to consider the evidence of Bernard's controversy with Peter the Venerable; for controversy it was, in spite of Peter's extreme courtesy and consideration. Critics have been too much influenced, I think, by the undeniable contrast in style between the two men's letters. Bernard was in that invidious position where to tell the truth is to utter hard sayings; the facts which he had to allege against Cluniac Benedictinism were so uncomfortable that no verbal artifice could have saved the writer from discourtesy in the conventional sense; and Peter's defence, admirable as it was in tone, was such as to lay his correspondent under the further necessity of pressing his first criticisms home, with an unrelenting directness which easily lends itself to the suspicion of censorious pharisaism. This, on the surface, is apt to prejudice our judgement on the only question of real importance, viz.; was Bernard right in insisting that Cluniac modifications of the Rule were essentially unbenedictine and dangerous, if not actually vicious? or, on the other hand, was Peter right in maintaining that these were only matters of mint and cummin and anise, and that the Cluniac need fear no comparison with the Cistercian, when judged according to St Benedict's essential purpose? If Bernard was right in his

<sup>1</sup> Compare Mabillon's details and remarks (*Annales*, v, 403-4).



facts, it is difficult to see how he could have written less strongly, or pressed his objections less persistently than he did. And I feel convinced that those who study not only this interchange of letters, but also Peter's own confidential words to his fellow-Cluniacs at other times, will admit Peter's admirable urbanity and sweetness of temper and yet decide that he had a bad cause to defend. The Cluniac cause has been very ably defended by S. R. Maitland in chaps. xxii and xxiii of his *Dark Ages*; let us here consider certain facts and documents which Maitland neglects; and let us remember, from the outset, that the Cistercians were justified by results. Not only during the years of their earliest fervour, but even to the end of the Middle Ages, they were recognized as more orderly and more spiritually influential than the Cluniacs. A century and a half after Bernard's death, we find a Dominican cardinal commenting on that verse of Ecclesiasticus (xxiv, 43) where Wisdom says, "behold, my brook became a great river." He writes: "or, again, we may interpret the river of this maiden Wisdom as a Cistercian abbey, abounding in all means of livelihood and in religious men and in spiritual weapons." And again, towards the end of the Middle Ages, Thomas à Kempis brackets them with the Carthusians as the strictest monks of his own day<sup>1</sup>.

The first difference to be noted between Cistercian and Cluniac was so slight that it did not come into discussion between these two abbots—the admission of "oblates." We have seen how these children, often far below the age of discretion, were frequently "offered" by their parents to God; and, again, how such dedications were generally treated as no less irrevocable than the spontaneous vows of mature age. Such was the early Benedictine custom; but monastic reformers looked upon it with growing disfavour. Not only did the extreme care of segregation prescribed by the custumals involve a good deal of trouble and labour in a monastery, but the suspicion steadily grew that this system of child-offering was not the way to make good cloisterers. Guibert of Nogent tells us that it bred the best monks, but also the worst. Ulrich, the Cluniac, in about 1070, congratulates abbot William of Hirschau on having dropped the practice altogether, and accuses the oblate system of being "the

<sup>1</sup> St-Cher, III, 221, 2; *Imitatio*, lib. 1, c. xxv, § 8.

main cause of ruin to such monasteries as have fallen, whether in France or in Germany." The Carthusian Rule, at about the same time, dropped the custom altogether, "by reason of the great harm which we have seen [these oblates] bring to monasteries"<sup>1</sup>. Peter the Venerable reduced their numbers; he would allow only six such boys at a time in his great monastery of 300 monks. The Cistercians, like the Carthusians, abolished the oblate system altogether; and Bernard, in two of his letters, definitely implies approval of this abolition. (Epp. I, 324.) The tide was now running decisively in that direction. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, four several popes ruled that no previous vow should be held binding unless the oblate himself repeated it at the age of 15. The Friars knew nothing of the system, officially at least; and unofficial irregularities in the admission of boys were early prohibited by their statutes, though still practised at times. It is credibly reported that the Council of Trent had intended to abolish the oblate system by a formal decree; and it has now been practically dead for centuries; the modern Benedictine "oblates" are something entirely different. They are typified in such semi-devotees as the novelist Huysmans; men who share to a mild extent in the routine of monastic life without taking the vows, and whose constitutional status closely resembles that of the Oxford or Cambridge fellow-commoner a hundred years ago.

Here, then, was a Cistercian modification of the Rule on which Bernard and Peter, Cîteaux and Cluny, were practically agreed, and which posterity has decisively ratified. But there were Cluniac modifications, all in the laxer direction, which Bernard definitely disapproved.

First, as to the reception of novices. Here the Rule is most explicit. Two months after the novice's entrance, and again six months later, and then four months later again, the Rule is to be carefully read from beginning to end, and the novice is to be warned: "Here is the law of this place; if you cannot keep it, depart freely." This custom was now neglected at Cluny, and Peter defended himself against Bernard's criticisms on three grounds. He pleaded the considerable latitude of dispensation which the Rule itself grants in general terms to the abbot; a plea

<sup>1</sup> Martène, *Comm. in Regulam*, p. 791.

which, as we shall afterwards see, has been put forward at different times to cloke the worst monastic treasons, and which was constantly and unceremoniously brushed aside in those grosser cases by medieval popes and councils. Again Peter pleaded that he here broke the Rule only in deference to those greater divine rules: "He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," and "The Spirit and the Bride say: Come!" But his third plea, on which he laid greatest stress, was that of Christian charity.

We consider that, if we scared the novice so roughly away from our Order, he would return to the world and be converted to Satan... and his blood would be on our head... We speak of that which we often see come to pass among us. Some... would go back to those worldly husks which they have left, but for the reflection that they cannot now, without eternal damnation, swerve from their vow once made.

On those three grounds, Peter defended the premature admission of novices to the final vows. To this Bernard replies with a directness of language which, I cannot help thinking, has misled some critics into supposing that the less vehement of the two disputants was mainly in the right, though the fallacy of that assumption has been shown by Charles Lamb.

This charity of yours destroyeth charity; this discretion is a confounder of discretion... Is it true charity to love the flesh and neglect the Spirit?... Let no man hope, by this sort of mercy, to earn that mercy promised in the Gospel to the merciful... nay, rather, let him expect that curse of Job: "Let mercy forget him... for he hath fed the barren that beareth not, and to the widow he hath done no good."

And, indeed, Peter himself empties his own plea of almost all its moral justification by his words to his fellow-Cluniacs, in those *Statuta* which have been strangely neglected by critics who undertake to judge between the two disputants, but which are essential to a comprehension of this dispute. He there explains his own decree that no man shall be received to the final vows, in any Cluniac house, without permission of the abbot, *i.e.* of the one man who, for the time being, rules the mother-house of Cluny. And to this decree he adds: "Unless it be *ad succurrendum*; or else in the case of great and profitable persons, who, if they were put off from day to day, would perchance go back altogether, through fickleness of mind."

(P.L. vol. 189, col. 1035.) Was not Bernard right in refusing deference to this charitable zeal for souls which so frankly keeps one eye open for securing "great and profitable persons" before they have time to admit second thoughts? There is an interesting parallel here in English ecclesiastical history. Prior Oxenden, of the Canterbury cathedral monastery, had long hankered for the privilege of admitting novices himself, without reference to the archbishop, who of course was also his abbot. In 1337, he wrote urgently; he had then five novices in the house, of whom he feared that "unless their petition be granted at once, they may easily take flight." Archbishop Stratford's answer was even more prompt and unceremonious than Bernard's: "As to those novices...if indeed they would fain go forth for the reason alleged, then let them go forthwith, with God's curse and ours"<sup>1</sup>. Considering that the then monks of Canterbury, in defiance of the poverty-clauses of the Rule, possessed each his own set of silver plate worth about £300 in modern currency<sup>2</sup>, Stratford must command our sympathy in declining to treat the dispute seriously as a question of charitable zeal for the salvation of souls.

The next point at issue between Bernard and Peter was that of food. The Rule definitely prescribes pottage and two other dishes for dinner<sup>3</sup>; at Cluny however, there was a multiplicity of dishes. Here Peter pleads that his Cistercian critics are "syllable-mongers," harping on small discrepancies of detail and misreading the spirit of the Rule. St Benedict, he argues, explains that two dishes are allowed in order that, if one does not agree with some particular monk, he may fall back on the other. Supposing, therefore, that the monk finds what he wants in neither, why should there not be a third, a fourth, to ensure this principle of variety which is assumed by the Rule? Profane readers may think here of my lord Peter in *The Tale of a Tub*; but it is more profitable again to cite Peter's own words on that

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. MSS. Commission, 9th Report*, app. i, p. 84 a.

<sup>2</sup> In these comparisons of medieval and modern money, the "modern" standard I take is that of before the war.

<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to understand Cardinal Gasquet's assertion that "the soup or pottage...formed the foundation of the monastic dinner" (*Eng. Mon. Life*, p. 24). The *pièce de résistance* was the next course, usually called *generale*; this is so often specified that the contrary assertion can only emphasize the extent to which medieval Benedictine customs have become as unfamiliar to the modern Benedictine as they are to the world at large.

other occasion, where he is writing to explain his new decrees privately to his own fellow-Cluniacs. He there decides that henceforth no lard or suet (which came, as nearly all commentators were agreed, under Benedict's prohibition of butcher's meat) should be used in the food supplied to Cluniac monks on Fridays, except when Christmas happened to fall on that day. And he continues:

The reason [of this decree of mine] was the great unseemliness that, whereas not only the clergy, not only the laity, but even children and sick folk, throughout the Latin church, abstained on Fridays from all flesh food whatsoever . . . yet we monks alone poured the aforesaid fat over our pulse, and partook of dishes fried therein. Moreover, this seemed so preposterous to all except our brethren themselves, that the very poor would not eat of the remnants of such food, but kept it until the Saturday, or cast it away forthwith in indignation<sup>1</sup>.

In those words we have not only full justification for Bernard's criticism of the Cluniac dietary, but also a key to that ninth chapter of his *Letter to Abbot Guillaume de St-Thierry*, which is almost Juvenalian in its satire. There the saint describes the dietary of a great and dignified monastery untouched by the new reforms; the fat and costly fishes; the number and elaboration of vegetarian dishes; the astonishing diversity of egg-foods alone:

so that, after eating of four or five courses, the palate is still ready for more<sup>2</sup>. . . The overladen stomach complains after its own fashion, yet curiosity is still unsated. . . The veins are swollen with wine, and the monk arises from table ready for nothing but sleep (§ 21).

Closely connected with this was the question of labour. The Cluniacs, like nearly all other Benedictines, had almost or altogether abrogated this prescription of the Rule in practice; the Cistercians revived it in its primitive fulness. Peter pleads in defence that a monk may find many good works besides manual works; and again he appeals to Scripture. He reminds Bernard that Christ said: "Labour not for the meat which perisheth,

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 189, col. 1028.

<sup>2</sup> This will be more fully discussed in vol. II. The kitchen rolls of Winchester Cathedral Priory show a total of 3944 eggs consumed in a community of 35 monks, during the 36 days between Nov. 1 and Dec. 6, 1492. (*Winch. Ob. Rolls*, pp. 307 ff.) These would be for the better guests as well as the monks; but it is not unusual to find an allowance, for the monks alone, of six eggs per person as a single course of the meal.

but for that which endureth unto life everlasting"; and, he appeals, of course, to the inevitable Mary and Martha: "Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary; Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." This plea, on the face of it, can scarcely impress anyone who remembers that the Cistercians had more right to quote this text than the Cluniacs of that day: for certainly they out-did their unreformed brethren in Mary's contemplation as they out-did them in Martha's manual labour. Nor, again, was Bernard the man to admit Peter's final argument, that St Maur and his disciples are recorded to have exchanged manual labour for prayer, seeing that they had now sufficient endowments to live upon without work. "Why should we be better than our fathers?" was the gist of such an argument; and Bernard's main point was, that monasticism would never be healthy again until monks strove to be very much better than those of their predecessors who had relaxed the Rule. And here, as elsewhere, his fullest justification is in Peter's own *Statutes*, where the great abbot of Cluny apologizes to his brethren for having attempted to "*restore the ancient and holy practice of manual labour, at least to some extent*"—*ex parte saltem aliqua*<sup>1</sup>. Peter then explains how he has been driven to this comparatively severe innovation on present Cluniac habits:

The cause of this decree was that idleness (which, according to our Father Benedict, is the enemy of the soul) had so far fastened upon a great part of our brethren, and especially of those who are called lay-brethren, that, whether within or without the cloister, except for a few who read and fewer still who wrote, they either slept against the cloister-walls—*adhaerentes claustris parietibus dormitarent*—or, so to speak, from the very rising of the sun unto the going down of the same—nay, even until almost midnight—those who could do so with impunity consumed wellnigh the whole day in vain, idle, and (what is worse) often in back-biting words.

What would the defenders of the Cluniacs have said if Bernard had written publicly what Peter here confesses in private<sup>2</sup>?

These instances may suffice; but the student will find that, on all the other points of importance, Bernard's criticisms are

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 189, col. 1037.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth while comparing what Ailred says as to the value of Cistercian reforms in diet and labour, P.L. vol. 195, cols. 607, 614.

equally justified by the facts. Bernard asked in effect: Is it worth while to swear obedience to the Rule so solemnly, when we have so little intention of keeping some of its weightiest precepts? or, (as he puts it in his *Letter to Guillaume de St-Thierry*, § 1), if we monks, who profess to have renounced the world, must still try to make the most of both worlds, are we not of all men most miserable? And it is only necessary to read the consensus of medieval commentators and monastic disciplinarians on all these points, as they are collected, for instance, in Martène's great Commentary on the Rule, in order to realize the fundamental weakness of Peter's excuses<sup>1</sup>. We misread monastic history altogether, unless we grasp the fact that Bernard's was the last great attempt to realize the strict Benedictine ideal; and that it was the failure of this attempt which, consciously or unconsciously, drove the Friars to seek quite different lines of reform. Even good monks like Peter were now defending relaxations which they felt themselves powerless to reform altogether; we may say of the monks what Christopher St-Germain, on the verge of the Reformation, complained of the clergy in general, that even those who themselves led regular lives were far too unanimous in defending the general irregularities of their brethren.

For we have only to read St Bernard's other works in order to realize how reasonable was his general attitude. His treatise *De Praecepto et Dispensatione* shows admirable balance of judgement on difficult points of discipline; he freely admitted other men's right to differ from him, so long as they did not pretend to be what in fact they were not. He was justly proud of his own Order; Cîteaux was *novum lignum*; a new stem springing straight from the Benedictine root. But he saw no reason why different congregations should not seek different paths to salvation, so long as each remained true to its own profession. In the above-quoted *Letter to Guillaume de St-Thierry* he writes:

What are all these diversities of monastic rule, and custom, and dress, but the mystic Coat of Many Colours—the coat, not of that Joseph who succoured Egypt, but of Him who redeemed the world? A coat steeped, not in the blood of a kid, but in the blood of the Lamb; that coat whereof it is written: "Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel?"... "Because I have trodden the winepress alone."

<sup>1</sup> This Commentary is reprinted in P.L. vol. 66.

He frankly concedes that it is better to eat temperately of meat, Benedict's prohibition notwithstanding, than to gorge pease-pottage to repletion; after all, it was a mess of lentil pottage for which Esau sold his birthright. On one point, however, he broke the Rule almost as directly as Peter, and excused himself almost as obliquely. The admirable and dignified irony of his two letters to the monks of St-Germer de Fly (67 and 68), and what seems the plain truth that Bernard's conduct made for the soul's health of a brother of that house, must not blind us to the fact that Clairvaux had no legal right to receive or to retain this wandering monk, without permission from his own original abbot. Yet the temptation was great; the life in many monasteries was such that a saint may well be pardoned for breaking the strict law to help a struggling soul; and we have no reason to doubt his biographer who answers us that Bernard often suffered injustice himself in these ways, rather than inflict it upon others. A rich man had collected nearly 600 marks to found a new Cistercian monastery: the money was stolen at Rome and, as the writer implies, at the Papal Court itself. St Bernard found an excuse for the thieves:

He said: "For they are Romans, and the sum seemed immense, and that temptation was grievous." For he was wont to congratulate himself that he had lost about ten monasteries, or sites for monasteries, because he had been unwilling to contend for them, and had preferred that others should wrong him, not that he should wrong others<sup>1</sup>.

There is a tendency among certain modern Benedictine writers to deplore the Cluniac and Cistercian reforms as mechanical systems which fettered true Benedictine freedom<sup>2</sup>. It would be difficult, I think, to find any distinguished and responsible Benedictine of the Middle Ages who publicly argued thus. Other great churchmen—Regular or Secular, from Innocent III onwards—frequently maintained that something like the Cistercian system of general visitation was essential to healthy monastic life,

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 317.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Abbot Butler, chaps. xiii-xvi, where references to other writers will also be found. On the other hand, the Belgian Benedictine Dom Ursmer Berlière, who knows the later medieval documents far better than Abbot Butler, agrees emphatically with Innocent III. *Revue Bénédictine*, 1911, p. 324\*, and especially viii (1891), 255 ff.



a necessary safeguard against the stagnation or open indiscipline of otherwise half-irresponsible monasteries; and I have never met with any Benedictine contemporary who ventured to contradict them. The old-fashioned Benedictine of the Middle Ages was often jealous or even actively hostile; the more earnest and experienced Benedictines willingly welcomed the new and vigorous growth of this *novum lignum*.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A CISTERCIAN FOUNDATION

IN rebutting this accusation of pharisaism against Bernard and the early Cistercians, we must not fall into pharisaism ourselves. We may feel quite certain that the saint was in the right, yet almost equally certain that we ourselves should have practised a less saintly course of life, and should have thanked Peter for pleading our cause. Not only writers, but readers of history necessarily assume more or less the position of judges; and here it is essential to avoid confusion between the criticism of persons and that of principles or institutions. Thus our sense of personal admiration may be untouched by our conviction of institutional failure; and sane hero-worship will leave room for the recognition that, in every organized body, the large majority are not of heroic mould:

We aren't no thin red 'eroes, nor we aren't no blackguards too,  
But single men in barricks, most remarkable like you.

Peter, as a follower of Benedict, had no real case against Bernard. But if Peter had chosen to start a new congregation of his own, frankly vowed to follow something less than this Benedictine Rule, and keeping to that vow with such constancy as we can expect from average human nature, then there would have been a great deal to be said for him. Bernard brought large numbers of men back to a Rule of great strictness; his immediate success in this direction was immense, even when we have made all allowance for hagiographical exaggeration. But he proved, at the same time, that it needed a man of most exceptional genius to revive literal Benedictinism; in other words, that it was an ideal only for the few, and that, if monks were still to form so large a proportion of the medieval population, the great majority of them would live, in fact if not in theory, by something a good deal laxer than St Benedict's Rule. So far Peter was right. A century after St Bernard, we get a very intimate picture of Cistercian life from Caesarius of Heisterbach, whose personality

and environment were distinctly above the average; and from this we may see that the Cistercians of 1230 were, to put it mildly, at a stage intermediate between Cistercian and Cluniac of 1130.

We have still earlier indications of this downward tendency in the decrees of the General Chapter, which, from 1134 onwards, are of great historical value<sup>1</sup>. Already in 1152 we find hints that some monks were beginning to eat flesh; and in the same year the General Chapter deals with that abuse which was most emphasized by later satirists against the Cistercians, that they became privileged and wealthy traders. To appreciate the significance of these early indications, we must remember that, just at this time, St Bernard was writing his last words to his uncle Andrew, the Templar: "If thou wilt indeed come unto me, let there be no delay, lest perchance thou come and find me not; for I am now ready to be offered, and my time methinks, is brief upon this earth." In 1157, when the saint is in his grave, we see that flesh-eating and trade are spreading from house to house; Cistercians are being drawn into the Benedictine custom of *pittances*, or endowments for special delicacies in food or drink on particular days; already they are beginning not only to accept the status of feudal lords—in this case, the invidious but profitable monopoly of mills<sup>2</sup>—but to justify it with something of the same jesuitry which Peter showed in his discussion with Bernard. It is now necessary to forbid to these reformed monks the buying of Saracen slaves, and the cruel custom of refusing them baptism; by which sacrament, of course, the owner would have gained a fellow-Christian but might lose a chattel. And in this

<sup>1</sup> The fullest collection is in Martène's *Thesaurus*, iv, 1245 ff. But the different MSS. frequently omit matters, however important, which do not concern the particular abbey or provinces in which they were written; and a great deal that is omitted in Martène's collection has been printed by Canon J. T. Fowler in vol. xi (1890) of the *Yorks. Archaeol. Journ.* and by F. Winter in the appendix to his *Die Cistercienser des Nordöst. Deutschlands*. D'Arbois de Jubainville has made considerable use of these records in his admirable *Études sur l'état intérieur des abbayes Cisterciennes* (1858), but there is still far more evidence in them than he has brought out.

<sup>2</sup> One or two modern authors, in ignorance or in misdirected zeal, have sometimes represented the manorial mill as a benefit conferred by kindly and patriarchal lords upon their tenants. All medieval testimony shows the monopoly to have been felt as sorely as we should have expected *à priori*; and it gave food for some of the bitterest complaints of the French peasantry under the *Ancien Régime*; see e.g. E. Champion, *La France d'après les cahiers de 1789*, pp. 142-5.

year, for the first time, there crops up publicly the eternal difficulty of keeping women away from the monasteries. In spite of the most emphatic prohibitions, this irregularity constantly reappears in later Chapter Acts, and had become chronic before the Dissolution<sup>1</sup>.

In 1182, the General Chapter is compelled to prohibit the selling of masses for money, keeping of armed retainers, stained glass in the churches, monks wandering outside their abbey precincts, and the keeping of wine-taverns on Cistercian premises. Moreover, it is here that we get our first hint of serious debts; a significant point, when we remember how busily the Order was exploiting its natural resources all this time, with the help of numerous lay-brethren and hired servants<sup>2</sup>.

But, though these abuses began early, and spread rapidly—as anyone may easily trace by following the official records from year to year—yet the Order was still too vigorous for the infection to become general. Caesarius is an excellent witness here, because he and his environment stand just about as superior to the average of their time and place as Jocelin of Brakelond; he therefore enables us to compare the better-class Cistercian of 1230 with the better-class Benedictine of two generations earlier, when monachism had, perhaps, travelled not quite so far on its downward incline. None of Caesarius's model abbots would have compromised as even Samson did, bearing with Geoffrey Rufus's incontinence in consideration of his business capacity<sup>3</sup>. None of Caesarius's model monasteries would have exploited its feudal dues and privileges as pitilessly as Jocelin shows the Bury monks exploiting them. Frank as he is, he gives no hint of monastic unchastity except as a sporadic evil in individual cases; we hear of nothing like that habitually vicious group whose doings impelled Samson when he came into power, to pull down the very walls which had witnessed them<sup>4</sup>.

About 1130, archbishop Friedrich of Cologne built the three

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. xxvii below.

<sup>2</sup> Such servants are figured on the tomb of one of the earliest canonized Cistercians, St Stephen of Obazine, of which a reproduction is given on Plate 11, facing p. 291.

<sup>3</sup> Jocelin, C.S. p. 90; ed. Clarke, p. 160: "The abbot, hearing of the evil report of his continence, yet winked at it for a long time, perchance because Geoffrey seemed to be serviceable to the community."

<sup>4</sup> Jocelin, C.S. p. 23; ed. Clarke, p. 39.

castles of Drachenfels, Wolkenburg and Rolandseck whose ruins may still be seen in that most picturesque of all Rhenish landscapes—the district of the Seven Mountains. One of the smaller mountains of that group, the Stromberg, was occupied in 1134 by one Walther, a hermit who had once been a knight. A cluster of other cells grew up round his hermitage; then the occupants decided to exchange their eremitical for cenobitic life, and became canons regular under the Augustinian Rule. But the cold and privations, at that altitude, proved finally unendurable; the community migrated to Reussrath in the Sulzthal. In 1188, archbishop Philip of Cologne granted the deserted buildings on the Stromberg to a colony of 13 monks from the Cistercian abbey of Himmerode, “in order to water the parched lands of his own see from that stream where grace flowed purest.” These monks, in their turn, found the privations intolerable; after three years, the abbot found his monks on the point of mutiny, and consented to migrate with them. They went down into the valley; chose a site beside a stream which took its name of Heisterbach from an adjacent forest of beechwood; received a single farm from the archbishop by way of endowment; and built a wooden church. Thus far we have a common Cistercian experience; from at least a score of these early foundations we have the same story of heroic and finally unendurable privations, followed by a removal to some more fertile site.

Even at Heisterbach, however, the hard times were not yet over. There were eight years of continuous war between rival archbishops of Cologne, Adolf and Bruno, as between the rival emperors Philip of Suabia and Otto of Brunswick. Many neighbouring towns were burned—Bonn, Remagen, Andernach—the abbey itself was plundered by Philip’s Bohemian soldiery. There was also the terrible famine of 1197, about 18 months before Caesarius’s own conversion; but abbot Gevard rose to the occasion. Except on fast-days, he slaughtered an ox daily for the poor; then, in their turn, the sheep; in the worst days, he found himself supporting 1500 paupers.

And thus, by God’s grace, all the poor who came to us were supported until harvest came. And, as I have heard from the mouth of the said abbot Gevard, when he feared that the store for these doles would fail before the time, and therefore rebuked the baker for making his loaves

too great, the man replied: "Believe me, my lord, in the dough they are very small, but they wax in the oven: they go in small and they come out great." That same baker (Brother Conrad the Red, who liveth still) told me that not only the loaves grew in the oven, but even the meal in the sacks and casks, so that all the bakers marvelled, and the poor folk with them, saying: "Lord God! whence cometh all this store?" That same year, the Lord God rewarded the charity of his servants an hundredfold even in this life. For master Andrew of Speyer, with the wealth which he had gathered at the court of the emperor Frederick [I] and in Greece, bought a great manor in Plittersdorf and gave it as a free gift to us. Who but God could have put that into his heart?

And Caesarius goes on with a string of anecdotes to show how monasteries have gained by charity and lost by stinginess; among which he tells (for the first time, perhaps) that story of the twin brothers Date and Dabitur which Browning picked up from Luther's *Table Talk*<sup>1</sup>.

The monks of Heisterbach began their stone church in 1202; it was completed in 1237; and the apse still stands, one of the most charming specimens of Rhenish architecture. The simple grace of this building is characteristically Cistercian; for by this time Cîteaux had developed a school of architecture in spite of St Bernard, just as the Greyfriars' churches were destined to give birth to a school of painting in spite of St Francis. The puritanism of the *Carta Caritatis* could not finally be enforced; but it did foster a spirit of severity and restraint which brought a new element into French, and, through France, into English and German and Italian architecture.

Here again the General Chapter records are significant. In 1192, two abbots were punished by the General Chapter for "over-costly and superfluous" buildings. By this time the authorities, reasonably enough, had decreed that, in the frequent cases where a Benedictine house joined the Order, the existing stained glass might be retained in its church. In 1213 the Chapter forbids all painting (or possibly *carving*, since the same word is often used in both senses) of all images except the crucifix. At the same time an existing painted altar is ordered to be whitewashed; permission is needed even to paint a door white. In 1235 a tessellated pavement has been introduced into one

<sup>1</sup> Caes. Hist. II, 233, 236. R. Browning, *The Twins*, in *Dramatic Romances*.

church; it must be destroyed; St Bernard had condemned such pavements in his *Letter to Guillaume de St-Thierry*<sup>1</sup>. In 1240, it is decreed that carved reredoses must be destroyed. Even in the fifteenth century, an organ was permitted only by special authorization from the Chapter General. It must be borne in mind also that stone towers were always forbidden; that the bells (generally two in number) might not exceed five hundredweight, and that the number of lamps in the whole church was restricted also to five. Here, as elsewhere, we must remember that a decree proves what the authorities aim at, and not necessarily what they actually obtain; but, even so, it is evident that Cistercian artists worked under considerable restrictions. The Chapter could not forbid that the churches should be beautiful; but they forced the architect to seek beauty in the simplest possible elements. We know that a Burgundian came over to build Fountains; what could be simpler or more graceful, for its purpose, than the long undercroft which served as hall, workshop and store-rooms for the lay brethren there? The beauty of Tintern is strictly irreconcilable with St Bernard's preaching: but it derives by a natural and legitimate—it may almost be said, by an inevitable—evolution from Fountains and Rievaulx and Kirkstall; and they, so far as we can trace, from the earliest buildings at Cîteaux and Clairvaux. So deep and subtle are the roots of all living art; so bracing is the influence of a healthy puritanism even upon the activities with which it may seem to have least sympathy. We may trace this in Milton, and perhaps not less definitely in Milton's master. Behind Virgil's puritan *excudent alii* is an art which could scarcely have taken its actual form in any more consistently artistic society; it is rooted in the stern, almost barbaric simplicity of the earlier Republic, as Isaiah's idealism is rooted in ordinary Jewish materialism. Virgil's melancholy, which touches us so deeply, is that of a man who has a long, strange past to look back upon; his tender grace, and the exquisite chiselling and polish which derive an indescribable charm even from their self-consciousness, are but the delicate blossom of many generations to whom the direct and concrete facts of life had been everything, and art nothing. In his simplicity we

<sup>1</sup> See *Med. Garner*, p. 71, for this condemnation, and for the saint's general attitude towards art.

see, at the very first glance, that discipline which had made the Romans into warriors and stern statesmen from father to son; but it needs longer study to reveal how even his famous disclaimer of art for his own nation hides an art more studied than that of his masters the Greeks. So it was with Cîteaux; so, again, in our own days, with that Oxford Movement in which the greatest spirits cared nothing for art, or forced themselves not to care. By thus losing their artistic life, those religious athletes found it; no better testimony to this can be found than the words of one from whom we might least have expected such a confession.

When I was fifteen or sixteen (wrote Burne-Jones to a friend in later life) Newman taught me so much I do mind—things that will never be out of me. In an age of sofas and cushions he taught me to be indifferent to comfort; and in an age of materialism he taught me to venture all on the unseen; and this so early that it was well in me before life began, and I was equipped before I went to Oxford with a real good panoply, and it has never failed me. . . . So he stands to me as a great image or symbol of a man who never stooped, and who put all this world's life in a splendid venture, which he knew as well as you or I might fail, but with a glorious scorn of every theory that was not his dream<sup>1</sup>.

A great deal of nonsense has been talked and written about the inspiration and self-dedication of the average medieval artist; Ruskin and Morris set the example of exaggeration, and their imitators, "plundering and blundering," have chosen their least defensible generalizations as texts for further exaggeration. But, however unheroic the average medieval artist may have been in comparison with the ideal of the pre-Raphaelites, the exceptional few must, in those ages, have taken the same inspiration from great precept and example which we can trace in the case of exceptional modern artists. St Bernard's impulse must have inspired more than one creative hand and brain in those days when Romanesque was growing into Gothic, however unconsciously on his part or even on the artist's.

The church of Heisterbach was built, then, not as Bernard or Stephen Harding would have chosen the design, but with a grace and self-restraint which owed much to them. But, like

<sup>1</sup> *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, by his wife, 1904, I, 59.



all new foundations, it possessed as yet no relics. Providence soon filled this aching void. Archbishop Dietrich of Cologne had built a castle on Godesberg with the moneys of a Jewish usurer whom he had taken prisoner. St Michael, whose chapel had stood on that mountain, disdained now the polluted place; two witnesses of unimpeachable veracity, both still living when Caesarius wrote, had beheld his migration. One, a priest, saw St Michael "in his well-known form flying with outspread wings from Godesberg to the Stromberg"—from the archbishop to the Cistercians. Another watched "that casket of relics, which he had oftentimes seen [in the Godesberg chapel], floating in the air over the Stromberg"<sup>1</sup>. To this was soon added "a molar tooth of St John Baptist, with three fangs," brought through many adventures from Constantinople. The same benefactor gave a piece of the True Cross; another, another piece<sup>2</sup>. The canons of Bonn gave the body of a martyr of the Theban Legion. "A certain youth" saw in a vision that the chest contained unsuspected spiritual wealth: "Ye are mistaken, for a man and a half are laid in that chest"; it was opened, and his revelation was verified. "These same holy bones are of such virtue, that water which hath been poured upon them healeth various infirmities, more especially tumours and swellings"<sup>3</sup>. With so many solid virtues as a foundation, and such personable relics to help them out, and the rich and busy and progressive Rhineland at their gates, these monastic colonists had an assured future before them.

<sup>1</sup> Caes. Heist. II, 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* I, 200.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* II, 136.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### CAESARIUS OF HEISTERBACH

SUCH were the origins of Heisterbach; and of Caesarius's own origins he tells us incidentally a good deal. He was born about 1180, probably at Cologne. He has much to tell us of the *scholasticus* Rudolf, and Ensfrid dean of St Andreaskirche, which now overshadows a hotel-garden due west of the cathedral. One day Ensfrid

passing by the school, heard the cries of a certain canon<sup>1</sup> who had grievously transgressed, and was being held down by four scholars to be beaten. Ensfrid rushed panting into the room, and (as I myself saw) threatened the schoolmaster (who was his own fellow-canon) with his staff and freed the boy, saying, "What doest thou, thou tyrant! Thou art placed here to teach the boys, not to slay them." The other, in confusion, held his peace.

Caesarius implies that he himself was in this school. "In truth," he remarks in a later passage, "if schoolboys keep innocence of life, and learn gladly, they may be counted among the martyrs" (I, 353; II, 353). He fell into a dangerous fever, and twice received the last unction; at last an effectual charm was suggested. His aunt had just bought a pagan slave, and was having her baptized. Caesarius's mother was persuaded to wrap the fever-stricken boy in her baptismal garment, fresh from the font; "at the touch of that most sacred water I soon burst out into a sweat, and was healed" (II, 248).

He gives us many living pictures of that great city:

Zu Köllen in der Stadt,  
Der Stadt, die viele hundert  
Kapellen und Kirchen hat.

There were busy merchants, who conceived of religion in commercial terms:

Karl, the father of the late Abbot of Villers, hearing that the Apostles should one day judge the world [Acts xvii, 31] thought within

<sup>1</sup> It was common for boys of rank to receive canonries at a very early age.

himself, "Sin is a heavy thing, and anchor-stones are of great weight<sup>1</sup>; so I will buy such stones for the Apostelnkirche, which is presently to be re-built. Then, at the Last Doom, when my good works and my evil deeds are laid in the balance, these Apostles, who will sit there in judgement, will cast the stones into the scale of my good deeds, and will turn the scale forthwith." So he bought a shipload of such stones, and caused them to be borne in chariots and laid beside the Apostelnkirche (II, 135).

We hear much of Jews and heretics, for whom our monk has naturally no sympathy, though he confesses to the constancy of the latter, and tells a very pathetic story (I, 198).

They were led without the city, and burned all together hard by the Jews' cemetery. When already they were in the heat of the flames, [their leader] Arnold, already half-consumed, was seen and heard by many to lay his hand on his disciples' heads, saying, "Cleave steadfastly to your faith; for this day ye shall be with Lawrence<sup>2</sup>." Although indeed they were far from the faith of St Lawrence<sup>3</sup>. Among them was a comely maiden, for all her heresy; upon whom some had compassion and drew her forth from the flames, intending either to give her a husband or, if she preferred, to place her in a nunnery. She consented indeed with her lips; but, when all the heretics were dead, she said unto those who held her: "Tell me, where is that Deceiver?" They showed her master Arnold; whereupon she slipped from their hands, covered her face in her garments, and fell upon his dead body, going down with him to the undying fires of hell.

It is Caesarius who tells, but confessedly at second-hand, that story of the papal legate's terrible word at the sack of Béziers. When the soldiery asked how, amid this indiscriminate slaughter, they could be sure of not killing some true Catholics, "the legate is said to have replied, 'Kill, kill! God will know his own'"<sup>3</sup>. He tells us of wild beasts; even a town-bred lad might come across a wolf here and there; but there were also men worse than wolves—great lords and their stewards. It is with a delicious

<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the long columnar basalt blocks which still form a conspicuous article of trade on the lower Rhine, and which would lend themselves to this use, though they are now mainly employed for building quays and embankments.

<sup>2</sup> Who was roasted to death on a gridiron.

<sup>3</sup> II, 302. There is no inherent improbability in the story; it is corroborated by Innocent III's official register. We there find the legate reporting gleefully that 16,000 persons had been killed, without distinction of age or sex, and Innocent answering in terms of congratulation (Migne, P.L. vol. 216, cols. 137-158).

shudder that Caesarius recounts God's present dealings with such folk in hell. He tells how Otto of Wittelsbach, in obedience to an inner impulse, decided to hang the first man he happened to meet (I, 378). He tells us of tournaments; but those who patronize these are also writhing now in hell, unless they have since repented and done penance. Private war is frequent between lord and lord; churches must serve sometimes as fortresses; one batch of prisoners is shut up in an oven (II, 222, 232). But there are noble spirits also; Walther von Birbech, for whom the Blessed Virgin fought at a tournament in guise of a knight (II, 49); Charles abbot of Villers, whose life was worthy of his princely birth<sup>1</sup>; Walewan, who rode in full panoply up the church to the altar, and there dedicated to the monastery himself, his armour, his horse and all that he had (I, 45); and that beautiful story of vendetta and forgiveness which Burne-Jones painted under the title of *The Merciful Knight* (II, 99).

"Das grosse, heilige Köln" was rich in churches; and the clergy, in their wealth, were corrupt. Caesarius shows us some beautiful characters; but he is disgusted at priestly incontinence and at the abuse of the confessional (I, 160 ff.). He repeats with approval that terrible saying of St Bernard's friend Geoffroi de Péronne, prior of Clairvaux, "The Church is now come to such a pass that she is not worthy to be governed but by reprobate bishops"; and that of a clerk of Paris: "I can believe all things but one; I cannot believe that any German bishop can come to heaven"<sup>2</sup> (I, 99, 100). He quotes freethinkers at the University of Paris who held that Christ's body was no more truly in the consecrated Host than in any other substance, and that St Augustine was no more inspired than Ovid (I, 304). Many priests, he admits, did not believe in transubstantiation; it needed miracles to convert them (II, 170-210). He had known the priest Bertolph of the Apostelnkirche at Cologne, whose nickname renders further characterization unnecessary: men called him Bacon-Gobbler—*Vorator Lardi*. The novice, Caesarius's interlocutor, thought that it was better for such men as that to impose even

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Martène, *Thesaurus*, vol. III, cols. 1311 ff. This, and some of the other stories, are fully translated on pp. 255-9 of my *Med. Garner*.

<sup>2</sup> The German bishops were more definitely feudal lords than those of most other countries.

the most terrible of all deceits upon their flocks, and to make only a pretence of consecrating the Host at Mass; but Caesarius decides that this remedy would be even worse than the disease (II, 211). Some priests used the confessional for blackmail (I, 160 ff.). Magical practices were common in all circles, orthodox or unorthodox. One "very common custom among the married women of our province" was to inscribe twelve candles each with the name of a different apostle; to get the batch blessed by a priest; then to light all simultaneously; that which burned longest showed, by God's judgement, which apostle should be chosen for her patron saint (II, 129, 133). One lady, having thus fallen upon St Andrew, despised him and repeated the experiment until she got an apostle of greater distinction; on her death-bed a saint stood by her, not that other whom she had chosen, but one who said, "I am that Andrew whom thou hast despised." Another, falling upon St Jude, cast the candle in the bitterness of her disappointment behind the altar; St Jude appeared that night and struck her with palsy. The consecrated Host was constantly perverted to necromantic purposes; one priest used it as a love-philtre; an old woman crumbled it over her cabbages to purge them of caterpillars, another put it into her hive to keep the bees healthy (II, 171 ff.). Christians, thought Caesarius, lived worse than Jews or Saracens (I, 188). Yet hand in hand with primitive barbarism went simple charity (I, 345-52). Ensfrid, dean of St Andreas, gave all his substance to the poor; they followed him about the streets as his friends; he might be seen helping the lame and the blind over the stepping-stones which were set here, as at Pompeii, to bridge the muddy streets. He would slip into the kitchen where the flitches hung for the canons' common table, and cut away bacon from the inside until he had reduced them to hollow shells, "distributing the flesh among widows, poor folk and orphans." He gave away his own clothes; nothing was safe from his charity; but Caesarius sums up one of his most dubious transactions with the approving sentence: "For priests are often wont to give women leave to steal from their covetous and pitiless husbands, that they may give to the poor."

From this world Caesarius took refuge at Heisterbach, apparently as a youth, and certainly in 1198 or 1199. One whole

division of his book is devoted to "conversion," or the choice of the monastic life; and a very strange picture it gives us. No doubt the majority of vocations were normal, at least among the Cistercians, but he gives us a strange list of motives which had determined a considerable minority of monks to the final choice. He himself had been mainly influenced by the beautiful Cistercian legend of the heavenly reapers<sup>1</sup>. But among contemporary converts he names criminals who had taken refuge in the cloister to escape from the worldly consequences of theft or adultery; there was Theobald the dicer, again, whom he himself had often seen wandering about Cologne half-naked, because he had gambled his clothes away (I, 177). And his own words forbid our regarding these cases as rare exceptions (I, 11, 34).

There are numberless folk also who are drawn to the Order by manifold necessities, as for example sickness, poverty, prison, shame for some fault, peril of death, fear or experience of hell-fire, and desire for the heavenly country. To these may be applied that gospel word: "Compel them to come in." . . . Even as many men are drawn to the Order by medicine for their sickness, so also very many are driven in by the road of poverty. We have often seen, and daily see, persons who were once rich and honourable in the world, such as knights and burgesses, entering our Order under pressure of want, and choosing rather to serve the rich God from necessity, than to suffer the confusion of poverty among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. A certain honourable man, setting forth to me the story of his conversion, added: "Certainly, if I had prospered in my affairs, I should never have entered this Order." I have known some, who, when their fathers or brethren were converted, resisted conversion themselves and came at last when they had consumed all that had been left to them, covering their necessity under the cloak of religion, or rather making a virtue of the necessity itself.

Ulrich made an excellent abbot of Steinfeld; yet, as Dr Johnson would have put it, he was an abbot bred from the corruption of a schoolmaster. The teaching trade did not keep body and soul together; so he made a clear bargain: "Pay my debts, and I will enter your monastery" (I, 228). This is a curiously exact parallel to the great abbot Samson's confession at Bury St Edmunds: "If I could have got 5 or 6 marks a year to keep me

<sup>1</sup> I, 24: the legend itself is fully translated from *Exordium Magnum* (P.L. vol. 185, col. 1062) in my *Med. Garner*, p. 75.

in the schools, I should never have been monk or abbot"<sup>1</sup>. And these two cases of conspicuously good monks may warn us against condemning too hastily a system which offered this sort of sanctuary from merely commercial failure. God seeks us more than we seek Him; and the real test is less how a man chose under great perplexity, than how truly he lived up to the choice thus made.

The most unsatisfactory class, we are told, were those who had been devoted to the cloister as children; the oblates of early Benedictine custom (I, 10; cf. 27).

The lord John, Archbishop of Trèves, a prudent man who knew the secrets of our Order well, was wont to say that boys or youths who have entered the Order at an age when the weight of sin doth not burden the conscience are rarely fervent. Nay, miserable to relate, they either live in the Order lukewarmly and ill—*minus bene*—or depart from it altogether; for they have not in them the fear of an accusing conscience; they presume on their virtues, and thus in time of temptation they fall away. Knowest thou that brother of ours who, not one month since, was deceived by a woman and departed from a grange hard by here? *Novice*. I know him well. *Master*. I know that this man was a virgin of his body, a well-disciplined youth, than whom there was none among our lay brethren whom I held in more esteem. *Novice*. Truly, as saith the Psalmist, God is terrible in His doing towards the children of men (Ps. lxxv, 5, Vulg.).

Yet for the frailer sex Caesarius judges differently; most instructive is the distinction which medieval disciplinarians draw, explicitly or implicitly, between the monk's vow and the nun's. The nun was the Bride of Christ; her carnal fall was not mere incontinence, but incest<sup>2</sup>. Whereas very few monks took the Benedictine rule of claustration quite literally, nuns were expected to live in lifelong seclusion, and Boniface VIII finally decreed this with a rigour which contrasts painfully with the

<sup>1</sup> Jocelin, C.S. p. 27; ed. Clarke, p. 46. Another very similar case is that of the schoolmaster Geoffrey, afterwards abbot of St Albans, whose case has sometimes been quoted in support of the legend that the medieval drama originated in the monasteries, in spite of the fact that we are plainly told Geoffrey was no monk when he composed his play, and never would have been one but for a disaster which drove him into the cloister. (T. Walsingham, *Gesta Abbatum*, R.S. vol. I, p. 73.)

<sup>2</sup> I deal more fully with this in my second volume. A nun who has murdered her new-born infant spends eternity nursing a burning fiery infant which devours her flesh, II, 231.

liberty often allowed to monks. Therefore our good Cistercian entirely approves of the custom prevalent at the convent of Lützerath, "wherein, by ancient tradition, no girl is received if her age exceed seven years. This constitution or custom hath made for the conservation of simplicity, which maketh the whole body to shine as the sun" (I, 389). As a type of this angelic simplicity he instances a grown-up nun of Lützerath who, when a goat once scaled the orchard wall, was easily persuaded by her jesting companions that this was "a worldly woman"; "when women of the world grow old, they always sprout to horns and beards like this." She thanked her informant for this curious insight into secular biology; for she was "such a child in mind that she could scarce distinguish between a secular man and a brute beast, seeing that she knew not one from the other before her entrance into Religion"<sup>1</sup>. Yet even a nun might be the better for having seen the world, and for having felt the actual pangs of conversion (II, 255).

Allard, our novice, told me this tale himself. He had an aunt named Jutta, who before her conversion, though chaste of body, was yet too light and wanton in her conduct; for she was of age to marry. One day she was playing with her sisters in the presence of their brother, a clerk of great gravity. He, cut to the heart at his sister's levity, took a hard flint from the river-bed and said: "This flint will sooner cleave asunder in my hand, than my sister Jutta will become steadfast, and take the veil." Yet God, that He might show how man must not judge according to the outward appearance, clave that flint forthwith in the brother's hand. Jutta, seeing this, was cut to the heart with her brother's word and with this miracle of the flint; she bade farewell to her marriage and to the world, and took the veil in the nunnery of Bedbur, where she keepeth that flintstone even unto this day, in token of her chastity and her conversion.

A very real conversion it was in many cases. Caesarius has much to tell us of the novice's hardships and temptations; he himself was novice-master at Heisterbach, and the whole book is written in the form of a dialogue between master and novice.

<sup>1</sup> Compare I, 231, translated in *Med. Garner*, p. 223. A good abbot, riding out with a young monk, is disgusted to find that his companion instinctively recognizes girlish beauty when he sees it, and lectures the seniors of the monastery on his return: "Brethren, ye have sometimes blamed me for not taking the younger brethren more abroad," etc. etc.



A knight and his wife had parted by mutual consent, to become monk and nun. He persevered; she went out during her noviciate; and business brought him back one day to his own old home. She fell upon his neck:

but Christ, the Son of Purity, who liberated the innocent boy Joseph from the hands of that adulteress, snatched this His knight from the unlawful embraces of his lawful spouse; for he shook her from him, went forth unharmed, and passed through the fire unburnt. That man, on his return to the monastery, might have said with Solomon (Eccl. vii, 26): "I have found a thing more bitter than death; even the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands"; whereunto the sacred writer justly addeth: "whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her"<sup>1</sup>.

The Cistercians had returned to the good Benedictine custom of putting plainly before the convert what he must expect during all the rest of his life; and many shrank from so undisguised a picture of self-denial. A professor at Paris, unable to face the strict silence of the Cistercian noviciate, entered as a postulant among the Black Monks; once professed, he claimed his right of passing to the stricter Cistercian Order, and frankly confessed that he had used these old-fashioned Benedictines only as a stepping-stone (I, 213). One novice, hitherto peaceful and resolute, suddenly at the last moment repudiated the shaving which was the necessary preliminary to his final vows (I, 217). In this and another similar case in the preceding chapter, the rebellious mood was conquered by a certain pious jocularly on the part of his superiors. Another novice caught such headaches from the psalmody of the monks in their stalls just over his head in choir, and especially from their lusty *Alleluia!* at intervals, that he found the experience intolerable as a lifelong prospect. He was a knight; falling once into a dream, he saw himself surrounded on all sides by the knights who had been his mortal enemies in the world, and could only cry aloud, "Lord, deliver me!" Thereupon a long army of white-robed figures came to his help, led by a standard-bearer shouting *Alleluia!* "as loud as the braying of an ass"; this holy reinforcement dispersed his enemies by the mere terror of their battle-cry (I, 220). Another knight,

<sup>1</sup> I, 260. See, on the same page, how Richwin the novice was set on fire by a love-letter from a nun; translated *Med. Garner*, p. 234.

"renowned in arms," frankly confessed his own fear of the inevitable vermin: "for their woollen garments breed abundance of these pests." His friend, once a knight himself and now a monk, shamed this man who had not feared swords and spears from his horror of mere lice (I, 214).

I know many, both clerics and lay folk, who live in the world and have long since vowed conversion, yet dare not to fulfil their vow for fear of the temptations. For they had such temptations evermore before their eyes, not considering the manifold consolations of our Order (*ibid.*).

It was natural enough that the difficulties should stand first in most minds; for even the consolations might sometimes prove to be temptations in disguise; and no medieval disciplinarian, I think, can be found to countenance the modern assertion that God's grace saves the monk from temptations common to other men, and especially from those which beset the celibate state. On the contrary, Caesarius is quite normal in laying the greatest stress on such temptations. Of single chapters, perhaps the strongest is the 96th of the 4th book (I, 262 ff.). The devil is almost indefatigable; driven from one point, he comes back to others: the man who can escape in the end deserves an emperor's crown; his fight is harder than the martyr's who has died by the headsman's sword. The same moral is enforced by many concrete examples (dist. IV, ch. 49-56, 97, 100, 103).

Therefore many of the more serious converts went out even during their noviciate. The novice, nominally, was quite free to depart at any time, that was the whole point of the arrangement. But in fact he was regarded by all good men as one who had put his hand to the plough and looked back, as a dog returned to his vomit, as a brand plucked for one moment from the burning, but now cast again upon the fire. He was branded—quite illegally—with the name of *apostate*; he was a lost soul; he died in secular dress, and there was public and riotous rejoicing of devils over this soul that they had won (I, 20-2).

When Ysenbard was on his deathbed, and Gerard (called Waschart) sat at his feet, the dying man exhorted him in the spirit of prophecy to perseverance, saying: "O Gerard, see that thou go not forth from the Order; for many thousands of devils await outside our gate on

the watch for thee." What became afterwards of this Gerard, we all know<sup>1</sup>.

But even the fear of the devil was not always enough; and Caesarius's evidence agrees with that of the Chapter General Statutes; apostasy was not infrequent, even after the final vows had been taken. Moreover, it was politic to urge less definitely spiritual arguments against the faint-hearted novice, who might be quite an old man (I, 215; cf. 217).

Gottfried, schoolmaster of St Andreaskirche at Cologne, though he was already decrepit and weakly with age, came into the Order with much constancy of spirit; he and I were novices together. . . . When the end of his year of probation already drew nigh, the devil began to recall to his mind the various comforts which he had enjoyed in the world, and the many things which seemed discomfortable in our Order:—as the weight of our garments, our long vigils and silence, the heat in summer and the cold in winter, our fasts according to the Rule and our slender diet, and so forth: the consideration of which things made him so faint-hearted that he began utterly to despair of perseverance. So he said to me, "I never thought that the Order was so strict: until now I always thought that we should be permitted to eat flesh after our periodical bleedings, and that the monks slept without their frocks. It repenteth me that I am come hither. I am purposed to sing Mass in mine own person in my parish of Herlisheim [in Alsace], whereof I am parson and which is now farmed out to no very good effect; and I hope that, by God's grace, I may there rule in honesty and blamelessness the people committed to my charge." But I answered, "That is a temptation of the devil, who would fain entice thee forth under a cloak of good works." Then said he: "If that be not good, then I will return to my prebend [in Cologne], and choose myself some chamber within the precincts where I may live so strict a canonical life that others may be edified by my example. I will be constant in choir; and whatsoever I can spare from mine own needs shall be given to the poor." Whereunto I answered again: "This also is a temptation of the fiend. If thou return, thou shalt be a common laughing-stock; and he who hath put this thought into thy mind will cast thee again into thy former sins." So, as he wavered thus in his mind, one day that I sat by his side, and consoled him as I might, he caught a Psalter and opened it, saying: "Let us see what my brethren will say if I come back." So he fell first upon this verse following: "They that sit in the gate speak against me, and the drunkards make

<sup>1</sup> II, 279. But Caesarius nowhere tells us the whole story: only in II, 352 do we find Gerard alluded to as "a certain sinful lay-brother."

songs upon me." Whereupon he cried aloud, "An omen, an omen! I will expound it unto thee. If I go back to the Andreaskirche, then my fellow-canons, as they sit in the church porch, will wag their tongues in judgement against me, disputing of my salvation; and again by night, when they sit by the fire and the cup goes busily round, their songs will be of me." So, by God's mercy, he came back to himself, and was comforted by his own thoughts; so that he took the full vows and, dying not long afterwards in good contrition, he was taken up unto the Lord.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A NOVICE'S SOUL

THE monastic novice, a creature strange to modern life, is yet of the deepest human interest. It is the task of history to justify the ways of man to man; when we are repelled by the past, it is because we have not yet understood it; *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. A mind unsettled by the Great War, and emerging by any means whatever from its unsettlement, is simply living again with Teufelsdröckh, when he trod the *Everlasting No* underfoot, and resolved to walk by the *Everlasting Yea*. And Teufelsdröckh, in his turn, was substantially living again the life of a Cistercian novice. So long as man is the creature that we know, he will be constantly oppressed by the sense of his nothingness, and again impelled to assert all the more fiercely, in his manlier moments, the potential greatness of the human mind. It is not only the voice of the religious ascetic which exhorts us to cast aside every weight that might hinder us in the race; intelligent Epicureanism tells the same tale; *entsagen sollst du, sollst entsagen*; man is mainly distinguished from beast by looking farther forward, and by recognizing that we gain most by wisely losing, that we assimilate most in virtue of right selection and steady elimination. This is as true in the material as in the spiritual sphere; it is true, even if there be no such thing as a spiritual world. The least imaginative of sciences, if it is to live at all, must have an asceticism of its own. If we let difficulties accumulate, they overwhelm us; they snow us under and freeze us in; we are bound hand and foot. Yet, for a soul that intends to be free, the outlets are as multitudinous and incalculable as the entanglements; somewhere, somehow, "the snare is broken, and we are escaped." The novice-room of a great monastery, or that corner of the cloisters where the novices lived their own separate life of probation, was almost as rich in romance as in psychological interest. The novice had come out of "the world"; he was working up for those vows which would make him dead to everything outside the cloister walls. *Die Welt ist aussen*

*schöne, grün und weiss und roth*; but this green and white and red of the meadows was irrelevant to his new life. Even while he sat in the cloister sunshine, he must not be permitted to forget that St John the Divine saw neither sun nor moon in Eternity. And it was his daily task to render himself independent of these perishable things; to rise proleptically from earth to heaven; not so much (his best masters would tell him) by the negative process of spurning things terrestrial, as by the positive attraction of things divine. As heavenly contemplation grows, earth of itself will recede; the soul, at its utmost flights, will look down upon this ball as a tiny point in space. But heavenly contemplation will not always come unbidden, nor even with observation; moreover, even amid spiritual raptures we may find ourselves rather at Satan's side than at God's; we fancied ourselves walking with Christ, and behold! it is the *daemonium meridianum*<sup>1</sup>. A whole spiritual Odyssey is scattered through the pages of Caesarius, novice-master of Heisterbach, but there is perhaps no book which puts the kernel of the matter so briefly and pithily as the *Speculum Charitatis* of Ailred of Rievaulx<sup>2</sup>.

Ailred was a very remarkable man.

This strict Cistercian came of a long line of married priests, learned, respectable, conscientious. If there were many such families in Northumbria, it is easy to understand why the movement for a celibate clergy made such slow progress in the eleventh and twelfth centuries<sup>3</sup>.

He was born about 1110, and brought up at the court of King David of Scotland, where two of his intimates were the king's son Henry, and his step-son Waltheof, afterwards monk and saint. Ailred became the royal seneschal; he also enjoyed the favour of our Henry II, and would probably have become bishop of St Andrews if he had not chosen the cloister; he became novice-master at Rievaulx, abbot of Revesby, and abbot of Rievaulx. His *Regula Inclusarum*, written for his sister and bearing close affinities to the more famous *Ancren Riwele*, was often attributed to St Augustine<sup>4</sup>; he wrote other historical and theological works of real value, inspired a valuable monastic biography, which

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 195, cols. 501 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Powicke, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> It is printed in P.L. vol. 32, col. 1451, and an excellent essay upon it will be found in J. J. Jusserand's *English Essays from a French Pen*, pp. 11 ff.

should be studied in Prof. Powicke's articles<sup>1</sup>, and finally earned official canonization.

As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so did the earnest monk long for the gift of tears in prayer or in contemplation. Tears were a recognized spiritual currency; ubiquitous are the medieval references to this note of sanctity; "our tears," says Hugh of St-Cher, in his comment on Ps. lv, 9, "are set in God's sight as a wine whereof He may drink"<sup>2</sup>. The Blessed Umiliana, when her tears ceased to come naturally, provoked them artificially with quicklime<sup>3</sup>. But these spiritual showers sometimes heralded a still more painful drought of soul<sup>4</sup>; moreover, like God's rain, they might even fall more abundantly upon the unjust than on the just. Caesarius reckons four causes which sometimes lead God to withdraw His gift, to the "sore temptation" of the religious soul (I, 200). And Ailred deals with the subject at such length, and so intimately, that it is difficult not to read his own personal experience into the words which he puts into his novice's mouth. For Ailred, like this novice of his dialogue, had been familiar with all the fascinations of worldly prosperity, and had lived at a king's court with that life of fitful irregular aspirations, and broken-winged flights towards heaven, which he here describes in another man's person. That, however, is a secondary question; whether the saint is here giving us his own secret confession or another man's, nobody will doubt that the words gush straight from the speaker's heart<sup>5</sup>.

It is not long since a certain brother, renouncing the world, came unto our monastery. Our most reverend abbot gave him over for instruction in the Rule and the customs to my poor self; and he soon began to ask in wonder what could be the cause, in my judgement,

<sup>1</sup> *A. of Rievaulx and his biographer Walter Daniel*, in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. vi, Nos. 3 and 4; a study to which I am glad to acknowledge special indebtedness.

<sup>2</sup> II, 143, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Wadding, an. 1246. Umiliana nearly blinded herself by this unnatural stimulus; and a later Benedictine complains that some of his fellows cultivate this grace of tears so artificially "that they sometimes dull their mind instead of refreshing it" (*Speculum Monachorum*, a Dacryano O.S.B. Abbate conscriptum, 2nd ed. Louvain, 1549, sig. C, v, p. 5).

<sup>4</sup> St-Cher, iv, 287, 3; cf. Caes. Hist. i, 91, of the monk whose pride in his tears gave a handle to the devil. Caesarius tells us of béguines and monks who had the power of obtaining this grace of tears for others, *ibid.* pp. 88-90.

<sup>5</sup> P.L. vol. 195, cols. 562 ff.; cf. 553, 559.

why he had felt so much more frequent compunction while he had yet lived and conversed in the world, and why he had been melted into an affection of divine love and had enjoyed so great sweetness of spirit—"things," said he, "which not only do I not keep longer now, but which it is not even vouchsafed unto me to enjoy at rare moments." Then said I, "Dost thou judge thy conversation to have been holier then, and more acceptable unto God?" "By no means," said he, "especially since I do many things now which, if I had done anything of the kind then, would have made all men think me not only holy, but even fit to be worshipped." Then said I, "How far didst thou experience that apostolic word, how 'we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God'? or that of Job: 'If I be just, I shall not lift up my head, being filled with affliction and misery'?" "Nay, I remember to have felt none of those things; yet I oftentimes felt a more express and sweeter love for Christ." "Wouldst thou have suffered more then for Christ, than now?" "Nay, not for one hour would I have suffered what I suffer now without ceasing. For, to say nothing of the rest, I would not for a single day have suffered this weight of silence, nor restrained myself on any account from vain and idle words. Nay rather, after those holy tears I would forthwith turn again to idle laughter—*cachinnos*—and gossip; my mind drifted hither and thither; my will enjoyed full liberty; I rejoiced in the presence of my kinsfolk, laughed at the babbling of my companions, sat down to sumptuous feasts, shrank not from cups, slept in the morning at mine own will, and filled myself with meat and drink even beyond the bounds of necessity. I say nothing of those pricks of anger which urged me sometimes, with quarrels and contentions and desire of earthly things, whereon my heart was fully set." "And now, what are thy manners and thy deeds?" Whereat he smiled, and said, "These are easily told; for they are notorious. My food is more sparing, my vesture rougher; my drink is from the spring, and my sleep is often over a book. At length my wearied limbs rest on a hard mattress; at the sweetest of my sleep, the bell rings and we must needs arise. I say nothing of that sweat of our brow wherein we eat our bread; or of our speech, which is to three men only, and that of the rarest, scarce in the utmost necessity. Is not that apostolic word most openly shown forth in us: 'mortify your members which are upon the earth'? or that of the Psalmist: 'I am become as a beast before Thee'? Truly we are become as beasts, going unresistingly whithersoever men lead us, and bearing submissively all that is laid on our backs. There is no room for self-will; no time for idleness or indiscipline. Yet I must not omit some things which delight no less than those others weary us. No quarrels, no contentions, no complaint and lamentation of the peasant for his dire oppression; no lamentable cry of the



injured poor; no pleas at law or judgements in the courts. Everywhere is peace and quiet, and a marvellous freedom from worldly tumults. Such is the unity and concord among the brethren that each thing seems to be all men's, and all things each man's. And, what doth marvellously please me, here is no acceptance of persons, no consideration of birth. Necessity alone begetteth diversity; infirmity alone, disparity. For the fruits of the common labour are distributed among all, not according to the dictates of carnal affection or private love, but as each man needeth. And how marvellous is it that all these men—three hundred, as I think—make one man's will their law! so that whatsoever falleth from his mouth is kept as carefully by all as if they had all conspired to that one end, or had heard the words from God's own mouth. And, to speak briefly of a long matter, I find no perfection whatsoever in the evangelical and apostolic precepts, or in the letters of the holy fathers, or in the sayings of the ancient monks, which is not consonant with this Order and profession." Then said I: "Thou art a novice; therefore I would attribute this rather to thy fervour than to boastfulness. Yet I must warn thee not to believe that there is any profession in this life which doth not contain some who do but feign; otherwise, if by chance thou shouldst perceive any man to go astray in speech or deed, thou shouldst be troubled by this unlooked-for novelty. Yet dost thou think that all these things, which thou tellest so fervently, can be compared with those tears of thine?" "God forbid," said he, "that those floods of tears should never have made my conscience secure, and never saved me from the fear of death! But now I care not greatly—nay, rather, I do most fervently wish—that He who made me may soon take me from this world. This may indeed be mine own infirmity of spirit, as thou art wont to tell me in blame, that I should wish rather to be taken away from these labours; yet I could not die now without a sure hope of God's mercy. Wherefore I marvel greatly why I loved God with a greater love in those days when I enjoyed less security." "I ask thee now; if thou hadst two servants, one of whom not only obeyed thy precepts most obediently, but also bore certain labours for thy sake, while the other daily transgressed thy commands and consented to bear no adversity whatsoever for thy sake, and if each said *I love my lord*, which of the two wouldst thou rather believe?" "Who could fail to see," said he, "that the first ought to be plentifully rewarded, and the second rebuked not only for his transgression but also for his brazen impudence." "Judge, then, by that same measure between thy former and thy present state." "But what argument can persuade me to disbelieve mine own experience?" "If any man should ask thee who is better, the man who loveth God more or he who loveth Him less, wouldst thou not unhesitatingly judge him to be better who loveth more?"

"None but a madman could hesitate there." "Set aside, then, at this moment, whatsoever blandishments of worldly sweetness still cling to thy novice mind, and all enticement of the pleasures that thou hast enjoyed; listen not to the whispers of the flesh but to the dictates of reason; answer me according to the rules of truth and the testimony of thine own conscience, wouldst thou rather be in that state than in this wherein thou now art?" To which he made answer, "Nay, if I would not deceive myself, nor so act that mine own mouth should become the oil of the sinner, to fatten my head (Ps. cxi, 5), I must avow that, if I were now to choose that former state, this would be not for Christ's sake but the world's; not through desire of greater perfection, but in weariness of my present labour, or at least in the search for greater delectation." "Nay," said I, "but I will boldly answer (for I know thy fervour) that thou wouldst not now be in thy former state." "Thou speakest truth," said he. "But if, in those days, thy love of God was greater, then thou wert doubtless a better man; and, if better then, why art thou more secure now? Dost thou rather choose security than goodness? But methinks thou must permit us to judge that man to be better who studies more to fulfil God's commands, than he who studies less." Said he, "I am in a strait on either side, and reason doth as it were dash me from rock to rock, nor do I find any issue. For, that I then loved God more, and that I oftener yearned to His love with sweet tears, is a thing which I must not doubt, since it is a matter of experience; yet I dare not deny that he is the better man who is the more fervent in love to God. Moreover, I am forbidden to prefer that old life of mine to my present state by all authority of Scripture; reason stands in the way of such a choice, and our conscience itself protests against it. Therefore I judge it most crazy to doubt that he is the better man whose manners are better approved by the authority of Scripture. But, since there is here a great contradiction, I must consider on which side it is less perilous for me to doubt, whether of the authority of Scripture or of the plainest reason, or of the conjecture of mine own experience." Then said I: "No Catholic may judge against Scripture; no peaceful man against plain reason; but who is not easily seduced by falsehood in judging of himself? Experience is fallacious; and it is written: *Believe not every spirit; and sometimes Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light.*"

The novice-master, pursuing his advantage, convinces his penitent how easily spiritual exultation may be mingled with earthly alloy.

Then the novice blushed for shame, speaking with bowed head and downcast eyes: "Most true, master, most true! For even in the

fables which men feign and spread abroad about the legendary Arthur—*quae vulgo de nescio quo finguntur Arcturo*—I remember that I was sometimes moved to floods of tears. Wherefore I am sore ashamed of mine own vanity, who, if perchance I am able to squeeze out a single tear at the pious readings or chants or public sermons concerning our Lord, am as satisfied with mine own holiness as if some great and rare marvel had befallen me.”

This recognition and confession prepare the way for the master's detailed exposition of the true love of God, and the true uses of this gift of tears.

The contrast and the paradox which the novice here confesses of himself, he has seen even more crudely marked in others (col. 553).

I ask thee, what are we to judge of the man who, sucked down into the bottomless gulf of vice, was wont to give himself up to every sort of filth and uncleanness, shrank from no wickedness whatsoever, yet, amidst such a life, was more frequently visited by compunction and tears; and this not only for fear of punishment and for the memory of his sins (whereof there is no wonder), but he would even be melted with wondrous affection unto the sweet love of Jesus, and seemed to embrace and kiss Him in his mind. What! are we to rival this man's vices, to follow after his way of life, to give up our flesh to enticement and our members to lust, in order that we may enjoy such sweetness as this man enjoyeth?

In these two passages from Ailred there is a whole life-history, or at least a whole act of this great monastic drama, tragedy or comedy as the case may be. Caesarius and others show us a motley crowd of converts; Hugh of St-Cher speaks feelingly of the novice's five great temptations (vii, 98, 3 ff.). Ailred's present penitent is like Bunyan's Christian, finding here and there his true yoke-fellows in Faithful and Hopeful, but still oftener his Worldly-wise and Pliable, By-ends and Turnaway, Simple, Sloth, and Wanton. The most earnest novice will not always remain on the Mount of Transfiguration; at the foot, he will find evil spirits yet unexorcised; those who have taken the life-vows before him will not always lead him in the narrow way (col. 353).

I myself also have known a brother who, having spent his whole day in gossip and potations, cheek by jowl with secular men and women, comes back in the evening to the monastery, and breaks out into such tears and groans that his importunate wailing compels the

attention of many others; yet doth he not in the least restrain himself from such temptations on that account. Are we therefore to desert the strictness of our Rule, and to follow after such uncleanness, in the hope of this sort of compunction? Who doth not abhor to hear of this? (553).

There is, again, the more commonplace Simple,

who demands from his superior that every extra lesson at matins be balanced by an extra dish [at dinner], and who requires more luscious feasts, more far-fetched condiments, in proportion to the greater solemnity of each holy-day. Such an one, when anything of this kind doth by any chance fail him, breaketh out into quarrels and contentions, and, unable to suffer the heat of his abominable passion, troubleth the peace of the brethren by his importunate clamours and his secret whisperings. Is it not worldly concupiscence which hath brought upon him the yoke of this wretched servitude [to the body], and the anguish of this debased travail? (549).

That is the eternal problem; we flee to the cloister from the world, but bring the world with us into the cloister. Petty ambitions are rife; favouritism and cabals and bitter quarrels within these small communities pent together within a single precinct; the whole 26th chapter of Ailred's 2nd book provides an illuminating commentary on Jocelin's famous story of Samson's election. The monks who complain of the heaviness of Christ's yoke are those who,

like dogs returning to their vomit, make unto themselves a belly-god under the garb of abstinence; under the penitent's frock they pant after worldly glories and honours; under the holy habit of continence they are defiled with fleshly filth; under the lamb's fleece they hide wolfish minds, seething with insatiable greed, they join house to house and field to field, they spare not the widow nor compassionate the orphan; the poor man's patrimony they claim for themselves. For these things they are prone to quarrels and contentions, ripe for the law-courts, tortured with continual cares, inflamed with hatred, distracted with anxious thoughts; for it is not Christ's yoke, but the world's, that is grievous. The Lord's yoke is sweet; and His burden light (534).

But there must be no compromise, no half-measures; it is the attempt to make the best of both worlds which enslaves us to the world's deceptive but most grievous yoke. A monk accepts a bishopric; this plunges him into a vortex of temptations from which only the elect escape: "Alas! to enter into the courts of

certain of our bishops, and, worst shame of all, certain of our cowed bishops, is as though one entered into Sodom and Gomorrah" (600). And among the worst snares are spiritual friendships; we shall see this even more clearly in later Cistercian and Franciscan history.

For most subtly, sometimes, doth an affection begin one way and end in another, or at least is changed; it will suffice to prove this by two or three examples. A man is attracted by the good report of some virgin, holy in body and in spirit, sincere in faith, of conspicuous discretion, fast founded in humility even to the perfect contempt of her own self, renowned for her abstinence, a preacher of utmost obedience. In his admiration for such virtues he reveres her with all his mind—*summo eam veneratur affectu*. While thus indulging more easily in each other's society, and, so to speak, while each embraced the other's sight in sweeter repose, they were sore travailed with the infusion of subtly-creeping affection; and these good folk, who not only would not look upon others guilty of such crime, but would even cast the nauseous thought of it with utter horror from their breast—these good folk, I say, could scarce frequent, without a certain vicious pruriency, those most grave and modest persons, perhaps even serene in their virgin glory, upon whom even the shameless, for very despair, would gaze only in shamefastness. Why is this? Doubtless it is because it is easier that dutiful affection should be changed to carnal than that either an immodest man should be clasped to a modest breast, or that any outward signs of modesty should be sought in him.

Disparity of age or sex, therefore, must dictate the utmost caution<sup>1</sup>.

We see, then, why Bernard, for all the *vivace carità* of his nature, is so fiercely hostile to the flesh: "O misera caro, o foeda, o foetida!...sterquilinum vile!"<sup>2</sup> And in many other ways

<sup>1</sup> Chaps. 27-8; cols. 601-2. In his Rule for Recluses, Ailred is still more emphatic (P.L. vol. 32, cols. 1451-4; cf. 1458-60, 1475, etc.; Jusserand, *l.c.* pp. 18, 21). I have emphasized in an earlier chapter this mingled apotheosis and horror of sex which so often characterizes the medieval mind and (we are sometimes assured) a great deal of Oriental poetry in all ages. Ailred's story of the nun of Watton (P.L. vol. 195, cols. 789 ff.) is, from one point of view, rightly described by Dr W. Hunt in D.N.B. as "a most revolting story of monastic life." But it is extraordinarily illuminative; and I hope to publish it later in my volume of documents.

<sup>2</sup> Sermo III in festo omn. Sanct. § 2; de diversis serm. LXXXII, § 2. Blampignon prints a still more vehement tirade from the French translator of 1462, who has apparently attributed a later medieval sermon to the saint: "Ta tant chère et amée chair n'est que meschante liqueur de fraille décoration et décorée fragilité; très brief deviendra charoigne pourrye et viande de vermyne. Se

Ailred's dialogue supplements Bernard's biographers; it throws light on those hours in the novice-room of Cîteaux which really formed the man. The youthful Bernard comes out plainly from other sources—his vivacity of mind and grace of body; the charms that women found in him and that he, if only for a moment, found in them; his earlier ambitions transmuted into an all-conquering covetousness for heaven. Bernard grown old, again, is still more real and familiar to us. Ailred throws side-lights on his crucial transition-stage, and on the transition-stage of those hundreds whom he begat and nourished in the gospel; we mark here how "the eagle when he moults is sickly, and to attain his new beak must harshly dash-off the old one upon rocks." This reveals more clearly the meaning of that daily self-dialogue: "Bernard, wherefore art thou come hither?—To be crucified with Christ." With Augustine, he was struggling "to know God and his own soul; these two things, and nought beside." But God was no nearer in 1100 than He is today; the soul was no less mysterious to itself; just as Job's ponderings and perplexities were proportionate to his own honesty and restless curiosity for the truth, so also will it be with the very latest generation that this earth shall produce. In the monk's case, this Job-drama was mainly played out in the novice-room or in the earlier years of his "conversion." There, or never, he found God and his own soul.

Bernard, in one sense, never attained to peace even at Clairvaux: "The fiery spirit, working out its way, fretted the pigmy body to decay"; he was worn out by conventual cares and those claims of worldly business that fastened and clung unrelentingly to the very end. But Ailred, in spite of grievous bodily ailments, reached a more philosophic calm. That had always been his goal<sup>1</sup>.

What is sweeter and more glorious than to feel ourselves raised above the world by contempt of the world; to stand on the lofty peak

bien considères quelle chose part de ton nez et des autres conduits de ton corps, tu le reputeras plus vil que ung fumier. Regarde, homme, quelle vilité est la création de ton corps; quelle nourriture as au ventre de ta mère. Comment affublé et atourné tu viens en point sur terre? Douleur faiz à ta mère et à toy péril; plourant viens entre les meschants recevoir maintes passions et douleurs en ce très détestable et périlleux monde. Ta fin est angoisseuse et douteuse et incertaine. Après la mort, horrible et déshonneste empoisonnement du monde, qui ne te couvreroit de terre?" (*De l'Esprit des Sermons de St-Bernard*, par l'abbé E. Blampignon. Paris, 1858, p. 42.)

<sup>1</sup> *L.c.* cols. 526, 534, 578-9.

of Good Conscience and see the whole world under our feet; to see nothing that we desire, no man that we fear or envy, no possession that another can take from us? . . . What, I ask, is sweeter or more tranquil than to be unshaken by the troublous motions of the flesh?

Lucretius or Cicero might have written those words. And our abbot, like Cicero, found great and abiding consolation in human friendship. He neglected—indeed, he would even have directly combated—that maxim of his fellow-Cistercian Arnulf of Boyers in his *Mirror for Monks*: “let the monk have no familiar friend”<sup>1</sup>. His *Speculum Charitatis* dilates on spiritual friendship; he devoted to it the whole of another treatise, *De Spirituali Amicitia*<sup>2</sup>.

In his illness (writes his subject monk and biographer), he was not of those who would say to his brethren, “Hence! touch not the abbot’s bed!”; but they trod or lay on his couch, talking with him as a little child prattling to his mother. . . He did not act so harshly with them as some foolish abbots are wont, who, if a monk take his companion’s hand in his own, or if he say anything displeasing to them, demand his punishment. Ailred was certainly none of that kind—*non sic Alredus, non sic*<sup>3</sup>.

It is in friendship, and in that Stoic freedom from perturbation already described, that he finds the monk’s Sabbath Rest—*Sabbati quies, Sabbatum spirituale; haec est septimi diei jucunda solemnitas*<sup>4</sup>. To that rest the novice shall attain if he will so run, not as uncertainly; if he will so fight, not as one that beateth the air. It makes us understand still better St Bernard’s sacramental sentence, “Eat now, for the way is long.” Among those who fall off in their novice-year are some of the eagerest and best-intentioned; among those who remain, are some whom Carlyle would perhaps have condemned too summarily; “with stupidity and sound digestion, a man may affront much.”

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 185, col. 1176.

<sup>2</sup> For his friendships see Powicke, *l.c.* pp. 315-6 and 457-60.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 508; *carpam* probably = *culpam*.

<sup>4</sup> P.L. vol. 195, cols. 578-9.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE NOVICE AND HIS MASTER

NOT only novices were tempted to apostasy, but full-fledged monks also (Caesarius, I, 221).

Many suffer this temptation and resist manfully; others are tempted, and utterly overcome both in thought and in deed; some are tempted and resolve to give way, but are recalled before their fall by divine revelations or by God's ordinance; some are restrained by punishment...Of the first and second I need give you no examples, for their temptation is very common; of the last two classes I will tell what I have heard.

The implications of these few sentences are fully borne out by the General Chapter Acts, which show a constant preoccupation with the dangers of apostasy. Caesarius, indeed, will always bear very strict comparison with the evidence afforded by the formal business documents of the Order. Prof. Aloys Meister, his most recent critic, lauds him as "a mirror in which we see reflected a picture of his age"<sup>1</sup>. Tissier, the laborious compiler of the *Bibliotheca Patrum Cisterciensium* in 1662, stands surety for him from another point of view: "If he be attentively read, even by a jealous critic, nothing can be found in him foreign to Catholic doctrine." However credulous he may be, nobody has controverted his own formal claim to a fundamental love of truth. "God is my witness, that I have not invented one single chapter of this book; if errors of fact there be, I tell them as they were told to me." He had travelled much, as the chosen companion of two abbots; he had been as far as Provence; and sometimes he explicitly omits details of which he does not feel certain (I, 154, 208; II, 361)<sup>2</sup>. The motto of his

<sup>1</sup> *Römische Quartalschrift*, 13<sup>tes</sup> Supplementheft (Rome, 1901), p. xxxii.

<sup>2</sup> Once, indeed, the novice seems to catch him tripping, where he tells how the Virgin Mary came to a Cistercian's deathbed and kissed him, adding, "a thing which I have never yet done to any man" (bk VII, chap. 50). The novice points out that, in chapter 32, we have already had the Virgin coming and kissing a young knight away from his unlawful love for his lord's wife. Caesarius explains that this incident, though related in the earlier chapter, had happened later.



Prologue is: *Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost*: these are the examples which he has been wont to tell to his novices and which two abbots have now commanded him to record for the edification of wider circles. At their bidding, therefore, he sits down to do his best, in spite of "my scanty Latin vocabulary, and the detraction of the envious." For his comparatively simple Latin style we bless him; the detraction of envious brethren is so frequent a complaint on the part of monastic writers that we need attach no special importance to it here. And the result is *Twelve Books of Miracles*, arranged under different heads. He has no lack of material. He tells how Winand, "our Winand's uncle, who was named after him," was carried by an angel in an hour from Jerusalem to his home near Liège. The novice replies

If Gerard of Hohenbach, as you have told in the 58th chapter of your 8th book, was carried by the ministration of the devil (though by God's command) from India to our province [of Cologne] in the twinkling of an eye, I marvel not at this feat of the angel; the ancient miracles are renewed in our days (II, 218).

And Caesarius ends that same book with the words, "If I would tell all the things which in my days have been done miraculously, that is, contrary to the wonted course of nature, my time would fail me rather than my stock of stories" (II, 265). His homilies have been reprinted by theologians; his *Dialogue of Miracles* was printed in at least six editions as a work of pure edification, the last being in 1662. A modern edition, for students of social history, was brought out by Joseph Strange in 1851; a supplementary book of miracles which he wrote was edited by Aloys Meister in 1901.

Caesarius had deliberately quitted the world of illusions, the world of worldly folk, in order to live among realities. We must not judge his spiritual environment by its least spiritual manifestations; but certainly there were some strangely unchristian elements in his faith, as in that of all his contemporaries, perhaps without exception. So far as tradition could keep the faith pure, he had every chance; the Cistercians were orthodox of the orthodox. It was they who had been most active in the crusade against the Albigensians; they had always been in unbroken

communion with the See of Rome, which itself claimed unbroken continuity from Peter and from Christ. Their eschatology was practically that of the early disciples; a close expectation of the Second Coming and a conviction of the imminent appearance of Antichrist; the final fight, in fact, seemed already to have begun. Nation was rising against nation; the disastrous earthquake of 1222 seemed a clear fulfilment of Christ's prophecy; it was equally evident that men's faith was waxing cold. But the early Christians had yearned forward impatiently and single-heartedly to Christ's coming—"How long, O Lord, holy and true?" Now, however, churchmen of the thirteenth century anticipated it with mixed feelings; Christ's countenance had changed somewhat as the world had worn on; Caesarius shows how thoroughly Cistercian religion was typical of the ordinary better-class creed, as described mainly from other sources in my earlier chapters. In all great cathedrals and parish churches, when Caesarius wrote, there was a Christ of mercy portrayed, but Christ in judgement was still more conspicuous, with angels at his side blowing the last trumpet, and Michael weighing the souls as they rose in hope or fear from their graves, and devils thrusting one party into hell while the others mounted upwards to bliss. The medieval artist, who often failed to catch the subtler harmonies of heaven, was never at a loss to represent the horrors of hell; and this disproportion in artistic execution corresponds to a similar want of perspective in men's minds. Christ was now predominantly the dreadful Judge; Mary was the natural minister of mercy; the evolution traced in earlier chapters was by this time complete; no great church lacked its separate Lady Chapel. The *Ave Maria* was found by experience to be more potent with demons than the *Pater noster* (I, 116 ff.). Caesarius warns the novice against too logical deductions from these superior honours which God grants to His mother; but master and pupil are alike consoled to think that their Order is specially devoted to her, and stands under her special protection. A monk was taken up in spirit to heaven, where he was distressed to see every sort of costume except the Cistercian frock. The Blessed Virgin herself dispelled his fears:

"So dearly do I love and cherish my Cistercians, that I nurse them even in my arms." Then, opening the cloak that she wore of marvellous

breadth, she showed him an innumerable multitude—monks, nuns, and lay brethren<sup>1</sup> (II, 79).

And, for the Cistercians' sake, Mary had once saved the whole world (II, 362; cf. II, 3). In the year 1237, a monk of Clairvaux was rapt in spirit before the judgement-seat of Christ, who was at that moment commanding the first angel to sound his trumpet, at which blast the whole world trembled like a leaf. As Christ was about to command the second blast,

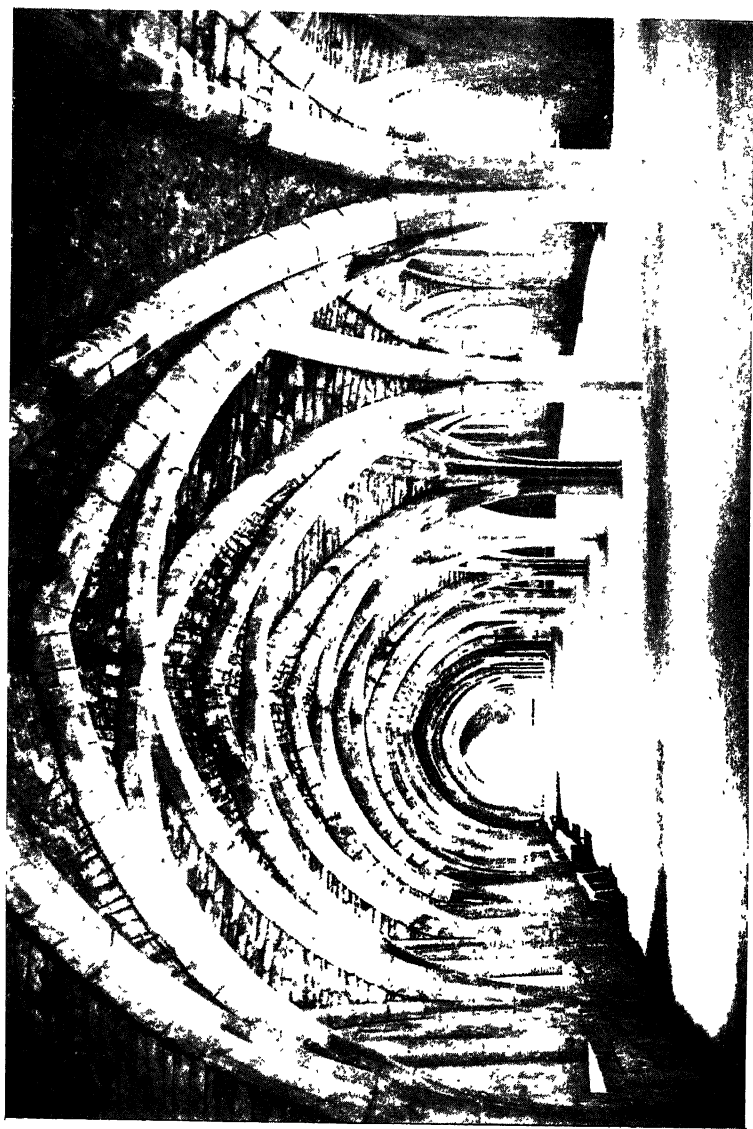
then the blessed Virgin Mary, knowing that this would be the end of all things, rose from among the silent saints and threw herself at her Son's feet, beseeching Him most instantly to defer His sentence and to spare the world. To whom He made answer, "Mother, the world is seated in such wickedness, and doth so provoke me daily with its sins, that I ought not to suspend my sentence or to spare mankind. For not the lay folk alone, but clerks and monks also have utterly corrupted their ways, and offend me from day to day." Then said she: "Beloved Son, I beseech Thee to spare them, if not for the sake of those others, yet at least for the sake of my friends of the Order of Cîteaux, that they may prepare themselves" (II, 361).

The world was spared; and in Caesarius's day the Cistercians in general were not forgetful of God's mercy.

Few pious minds could escape in those days from the crude dualism of popular religion; and the devil is almost as great a reality to Caesarius as God or the Virgin Mary. Mountain and forest were the special haunts of demons. One old monk at Heisterbach, before his conversion, had seen them one night at full moon (I, 281). The Huns were half-demons, begotten of devils from hell upon outcast Gothic women (I, 124). Your true demon has no back; he is hollow, as if stamped out of a thin sheet of metal, and therefore never lets you see him from behind—*daemones posteriora non habent* (I, 118)<sup>2</sup>. The very sight of them often maddens or kills (I, 311–6; II, 313). Volcanoes are mouths of hell (II, 322–3). If you are inclined to doubt of the

<sup>1</sup> The Cistercians were the first Order to dedicate themselves formally to the B.V.M., who, it was said, promised "that the devil should have no power over any who died in that frock." (AA.SS. Boll. Jan. 26, vol. III, 1863, p. 370.)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Konrad v. Würzburg, quoted in A. Kaufmann, *Caes. v. Heisterbach* (Cologne, 1850), p. 48. This is illustrated in the sculptures at the west portal of Strassburg, where a tempting demon, in the dress of a young noble, is hollow behind and filled with snakes and toads. But this cannot have been the common and literal belief, or the legend of the Templars' initiation would scarcely have been possible.



LAY BRETHREN'S QUARTERS AT FOUNTAINS ABBEY



LAY BRETHERN'S DORMITORY AT FOUNTAINS

powers of evil, "go to Ireland and enter into St Patrick's Purgatory; then you will never again doubt of purgatorial pains."

But why should our novice go to Ireland for what he might chance to see at any moment in his monastery? Christian, the monk of Himmerode, "very often saw devils under divers forms, as of men, or beasts, or reptiles" (II, 20). Caesarius devotes his whole fifth book to demons, and a great part of the other books also. The sweetest spiritual consolations might turn out to be diabolical deceptions (I, 332). The devil might even take the shape of one's own prior; or he might come into the abbey church driving a whole herd of swine before him (I, 333). In unreformed abbeys, the spiritual vision of pious lay folk might detect demons sitting like cats or apes on the monks' shoulders. They loved to play among lukewarm or irreverent monks in choir (I, 202-5). They tempted to infidelity, madness and suicide (I, 128; 207 ff.). One tempted a lay brother to apostasy, under promise of making him bishop of Halberstadt; the wretched dupe came to the gallows instead of the mitre. Another, disguised as a cuckoo, led a lay brother to damnation (I, 294-6). Well might the novice exclaim (I, 289): "From this it would seem that there are more devils in the world than bad men." To which Caesarius replies:

*M.* As for the present time we cannot solve this problem; but we know for certain that at the world's end, when the number of the reprobate is consummated, there will be many more evil men than demons.

*N.* How may that be proved?

*M.* One tenth part of the angels fell from heaven; and these are the devils. Now St Gregory saith that just so many good men shall come to heaven as the number of the angels who remained faithful; whereby we may reckon that the number of the elect shall be nine times greater than the number of the devils. Now it is indubitable that evil men are beyond all comparison more numerous than the good. Yet let evil men take no consolation from this, that they shall so far outnumber the devils; for these are of so great natural power, of so concentrated malice, of such exquisite skill in torments, that one may well suffice to torture many thousand men.

Behind the obvious danger of thus applying the four rules of arithmetic to things spiritual, we must not fail to recognize this man's sincerity and simple faith, according to the standards of

his time. The book is almost Franciscan in its naïve simplicity; and in one passage Caesarius anticipates one of Francis's most famous sayings.

Abbot Karl was wont to say to me during my noviciate: "Brother, if thou wilt be at rest in this Order, let the simplicity of the Order suffice thee."... Even as the doings or sayings of a Jocolator often please, where they would displease as coming from another man, so is it with the simple minded, they are, so to speak, the jocolatores of God and His holy angels.

And one most distinguished Cistercian, at least, lived consistently up to this maxim<sup>1</sup>. Hélinand, who is sometimes reckoned among the official *Beati* of the Church, was born of a noble family near Beauvais and attained distinction as a minstrel and poet at the court of Philippe-Auguste. He wearied of the world, and suddenly entered the Cistercian Order, where he became prior of Froidmont, refused the abbacy in later years, and died between 1229 and 1237. His famous French poem on Death celebrates the princes, nobles, and prelates whose esteem he kept to the end of his life; and he himself tells us an intimate story of Philippe de Dreux.

This prelate sometimes tarried in our monastery, for devotion's sake, and not, as some bishops, for devoration; for the common hospitality of our Order attracts more devourers than its singular sanctity attracts devotees. The bishop bade me so order that he might hear our morning Mass. I came to him after prime had been sung, and found him still sleeping; moreover, none of his household or of his familiars dared to wake him. Therefore I came near and awoke him as if in jest, saying: "The sparrows have long since been awake to bless the Lord, and our pontiffs still snore upon their couch." He, awaking in confusion at the sound of my voice, and indignant at the freedom of my rebuke, said with some tokens of wrath: "Hence, wretch, and go kill thine own lice!" But I, taking his passion in jest, made answer: "Nay, father, but do thou see to it that thy vermin slay thee not; mine own vermin have I already slain. Know therefore that there is this difference between rich men's and poor men's vermin; rich men are eaten of lice, and poor men's lice are slain by the hands of the poor. Read the Books of Maccabees, and Josephus,

<sup>1</sup> There is a long and very useful article on Froidmont and Hélinand in *Acad. Oise*, tom VII (1870), pp. 522 ff., by abbé Deladreau. The Philippe story is in P.L. vol. 212, col. 730; *Spec. Hist.* lib. XXIX, c. 116; Fordun, *Scotichronicon*, lib. VIII, c. 63. In the 11th chapter, Hélinand tells a very picturesque story of Herne the Hunter.

and the Acts of the Apostles, and thou shalt find how those mighty kings Antiochus and Herod Agrippa were eaten of worms." The bishop, overpowered by these reasons and citations, held his peace.

We have seen how Caesarius treats this difficulty of vermin as inherent in Cistercian life; it was a common theme for Philistine mockery; but the bishop, scratching Hélinand, found here a Tartar. This poet-monk was a true ancestor of Francis's Fra Pacifico; and there is no more human Franciscan story than "Our Lady's Tumbler"; that Cistercian tale of the lay-brother and ex-acrobat at Clairvaux, who, having no other offering for the Virgin Mary, went daily and displayed in secret, before her image, all the tumbling tricks by which he had earned praise and money while yet in the world<sup>1</sup>. Both Caesarius and the *Exordium Magnum* abound with touching tales of simple lay-brethren, often soldiers who had brought their scars to the cloister in later life. One, sent on business to King Roger of Sicily, reached that distant court after difficulties which would have rebuffed any other man, earned all folks' good-will, and received in Rome, on his homeward journey, a present of ten buffaloes for Clairvaux.

To the utter amazement of all men, this weakly time-worn man, with only two boys to help him, drove these enormous and fierce beasts, far exceeding oxen in size and strength, through so many perilous passes, so many lurking thieves and robbers, safe and sound after all that long journey—beasts, as it is said, which had never before been seen on this side of the Alps... At last they reached Clairvaux, and he displayed to the wonder of the whole countryside these hitherto unknown cattle, which breed freely and daily among us, and have already spread hence into many other provinces. Then this lay-brother returned to his spiritual exercises, and cheerfully bowed his aged shoulders again to that holy discipline which he had learned from St Bernard<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Del Tombeor Nostre-Dame*, first printed in *Romania* (II, 315) and translated by Dr P. H. Wicksteed (Dent, 1900); again by Mr Eugene Mason in *Everyman's Library*, vol. 497. A full summary will be found in H. Adams, *Mont St-Michel and Chartres* (1913), pp. 281 ff. There is an apparently earlier version in the *Chronica de Mailros* (Bannatyne Club, 1835), p. 187. Here it is not an ex-tumbler and lay-brother, but an actual choir-monk, a special lover of Our Lady, who saw her very presence in church and, thinking himself alone with her, "danced before his beloved with most marvellous merriment"; his brethren, coming unexpectedly, were shocked at gestures which seemed so "foolish and disorderly." Melrose also was a Cistercian house.

<sup>2</sup> *Exord. Mag.* P.L. vol. 185 bis, col. 1122.



From Caesarius alone, a selection might be made which would not be unworthy to stand beside the *Fioretti di San Francesco*.

For that "simplicity of the Order," which abbot Karl valued so highly, did indeed suffice to Caesarius; he shows himself everywhere an honest and straightforward soul; one who can afford to face the simple facts, as they present themselves to his Cistercian mind. When all is said and done, *plures cum nobis*; "they that be with us are more than they that be with them." Many are the infernal legions; bitter is their special spite against us who are their avowed enemies; but greater still are the virtues of our Order.

Our life is warfare and temptation; warfare in the strictness of our discipline, temptation in our labours and perils. . . To our converts, however numberless and grievous their past sins may have been, nothing more is enjoined by way of atonement than that they should keep the rules of our Order. . . One day when St Bernard chanced to pass by where a man was about to be hanged, he begged for his life. The judge answered: "My lord abbot, this is a thief, who has earned the gallows." Then said the saint: "Give him to me, and I will give him to the gallows," whereby he intended the strict severity of our Order. We have this indult from the Pope, that the observance of our Rule shall have the force of complete atonement for sinners (I, 172).

But the observance must be strict; a monk of good life, dying of fever, cast off the heavy frock for the sake of bodily relief, and was driven by St Benedict from the gate of paradise; he was allowed to go back to earth for a few hours to put on his discarded frock and claim his heavenly reward (II, 298). For the frock itself has the sacramental virtue of a second baptism; a thief, who came to Clairvaux and took the vows in order to spy an occasion of stealing the sacred vessels, was converted to an edifying life of piety when once he had put on that sacred garment (I, 9). Hence the unavoidable deduction that all true Cistercians will come to heaven<sup>1</sup>. They might even receive this assurance in their lifetime; Bertram, a Lombard Cistercian, was so devoted to the Virgin Mary that it was torture to him to hear any doubt of her bodily Assumption; hence he could not bear to hear St Jerome's sermons, or the abbey sermons in Chapter, which might at any time expose him to this trial. One day an angel led him up to heaven, and showed him Enoch and Elias

<sup>1</sup> Herbertus, *De Miraculis*. P.L. vol. 185 bis, col. 1323.

holding a very great volume, written in golden letters, wherein was only one leaf left unwritten. Then said the angel: "This is the Book of Predestination, containing the names of all the elect from the beginning of the world even unto this day. When this blank leaf is filled, then shall come the end of the world." And he showed him his own name; which when Bertram had joyfully read, the angel said unto him: "Never shall thy name be razed from this book." That was the book of Ps. cxxxviii, 16 (Vulg.) and Luke x, 20.

The novice raises a difficulty about the apparently contradictory implication of Ps. lxxviii, 29 (Vulg.); but Caesarius is not to be caught tripping; he knows and can reconcile these antinomies (II, 47). Many miracles have been wrought by the relics of men whom Caesarius and his friends had seen and talked with. Even Steppo, the nuns' priest of St Salvatorberg, though in his last illness he fell into a raving frenzy and belched forth many blasphemies, worked miracles after death (II, 345).

This is a great stumbling-block to our good novice-master, that the wicked should sometimes die so easily, and the good so hard; but his conclusion is the usual medieval doctrine that the last moment of a man's life is decisive for all eternity<sup>1</sup>. And the moral drawn from all these varied incidents is always to the honour of the Order. Kuno of Malberg, quitting his many castles, took the cowl in his old age (II, 285). After three years of laudable conversation, he took a mortal fever.

In those days was a woman in the village of Mayen that was vexed with a devil; and at the hour of Kuno's death she came to her priest, saying that the devil had gone forth from her. Yet, after a little while, he came back and began to vex the poor wretch worse than before. Wherefore she was brought before the priest, who catechized the devil through the woman's mouth, saying: "Wretch, wert thou indeed gone forth?" "Yea," said he. "And where wert thou, accursed spirit?" "At the abbey of Himmerode." "What didst thou there?" Then said this devil: "Kuno lay dying there on his mat; and almost 15,000 of my fellows flocked to his deathbed, as to a great merry-making; and I thought I should never be happy if I went not with them. So, knowing that this woman was a vessel given over unto me, whom I could never lose, I left her awhile and went with them." "What was done there?" said the priest; and the demon made answer, "Those accursed shavelings came and stood round the body and

<sup>1</sup> II, 266; cf. 319. I have dealt briefly with this on p. 4 of the 13th of my *Medieval Studies—The Plain Man's Religion in the Middle Ages*.

began to gabble so hard that none of us dared to come near." "Whither, then, is his soul gone?" "To the feet of the Most High! and see, good folk, what injustice is thus done to us! This man had served us more than forty years, standing ready at our beck and call by night and day; and now he hath served another Lord but three brief years, and He hath torn him from our hands! So we fell into such fury at the loss of that soul that we fell one upon the other, tooth and nail<sup>1</sup>; and now I have no resource but to vex this vessel of perdition who is given over unto me."

No less conclusive are the victories of the Order recorded in the fifth chapter of the twelfth book. At the deathbed of Caesarius's own abbot of Heisterbach (so a demon confessed to a knight in one of these expansive moments)

"we were more in number than the sand of the sea. Yet we gat but little profit; for those lousy monks grovelled around him, grunting out their psalms like pigs, and suffered us not to come near. And the fellows have a gabble-chamber that they call their chapter-house, wherein we are robbed of all the rights in them that we gain from their faults." Then said the knight: "Fool! how didst thou dare to come to the deathbed of so just a man?" "Dare?" said he: "why, I was present when the Son of God breathed his last, sitting on the arm of the cross!" (II, 319).

At another time, the demons would complain how the Great Lady had come and driven them away. The superior sanctity of the Cistercians, and their greater security of soul at the last decisive moment, brought them even more than their full proportion of monks *ad succurrendum*, men borne into the abbey even at their last gasp, and watched over in those fatal or triumphant moments by the psalmodiant brethren. Something of this is implicit, perhaps, even here and there in St Bernard; but it was the Order which systematized it. The movement, as reflected in Caesarius and his contemporaries, is unquestionably honourable and beneficent; but what was spiritual in St Bernard is too often materialized in his successors.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dante, *Inferno*, xxii, 136 ff.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE CISTERCIANS OF 1250 A.D.

YET Caesarius shows us, on the whole, an Order of real discipline and religious fervour; *si sic omnia!* We see clearly why the early Dominican and Franciscan reformers looked upon the Cistercians as their best friends among the older Orders; though Caesarius himself seems to have had no real affection for the latter, to whom he evidently alludes without ever naming them (I, 373, 390; II, 155, 162, 210, 242, 244). It seems that, like other Germans of whom Jordan of Giano tells us (ch. 3), he confused the Franciscans with other religious tramps of the day. All that he tells us of the difficulties and temptations of the noviciate—and there is much more of this than I have found room to quote—points to the real severity of life at Heisterbach and the sister-abbey. Their silence was far stricter than that of the ordinary Benedictines (I, 213); their labour was taken seriously. One abbot, “very perfect in the discipline of the Order, with this single exception, that he would scarce ever go out with the brethren to manual labour,” appeared to a friend after death. “His body and his garments were radiant with light from the girdle upwards, but his legs ulcerated and black as coal...‘no tongue’ (said he) ‘can tell the torments that I have suffered in these legs!’” (II, 341). A monk might despise such servile work as the planting of cabbages in the convent garden: “this is a dirty job which one of my father’s handmaidens would disdain”; but that revolt of pride gave him over for a while to the devil (I, 335). The services in choir were strict and laborious; a dying monk, transported for a moment to hear the angels’ songs in heaven, contrasts them with “our chants, so full of discord, weariness of mind and lassitude of body.” Even the stricter monks might be overcome with sleep; and “there are some who have no sooner begun to chant, pray, or read, than they fall asleep” (I, 202–5; cf. II, 104, 163, 296). It is “very miraculous” to find a Cistercian who never suffers from headache (II, 34). At the same time, medicines

are still discouraged in the Order, though not so strictly as in St Bernard's day (II, 67). The food, as a rule, was still plain and plentiful; but the system of "pittances," or extra dishes, has become firmly established; a monk who refuses to partake of such pittances is looked upon as righteous overmuch (II, 90). A distinguished Cistercian of this time, Henry, cardinal bishop of Albano, once demanded of his retinue on a journey, "Who among you will tell us some good thing?" They indicated a certain illiterate but straightforward monk, who, after vain attempts to excuse himself, spoke at last.

When we are all dead and come to the gate of paradise, there we shall meet our holy father Benedict. Seeing us cowed monks, he will bring us in with joy; but when he sees Henry, cardinal and bishop, he will marvel at his mitre, and ask, "Who art thou?" The bishop will say, "Father, I am a monk of Cîteaux." The saint will make answer: "Nay, a monk hath no horns." Then, while our Henry pleads hard on his own behalf, Saint Benedict will give sentence thus to the doorkeepers: "Lay him on his back, and rip open his belly. If ye find therein unseasoned cabbages, beans, peas, lentils, pulse, and food prescribed by our Rule, let him be brought in with these monks. But if you find him filled with great fish and delicate fare such as worldly folk enjoy, let him stay without." And with these words, turning to the cardinal, he said, "What wilt thou say at that hour, poor Henry?" The cardinal smiled at these words, and commended the sermon (I, 247).

The real monk knows how to season this plain fare

with three grains of pepper. . . the first grain is our long nightly vigils in prayer; the second, our manual labour; the third, despair of getting any choicer fare than this (I, 246).

And with good will, one may soon reconcile oneself to this diet: the pupil tells his master in another place

novice as I am (that I may say nothing of my perfect fellows) God has changed all my bitterness to sweetness. Our unseasoned dishes of pulse have more savour for me now, than the most delicious flesh-dishes before my conversion (II, 230; cf. I, 240-59, 342; II, 223).

There is a deep note of reality in Hélinand's words on this subject<sup>1</sup>. He is arguing with one who, having put his hand to the plough, now shrinks and looks back.

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 212, col. 747; *Spec. Hist.* p. 1231. Abbé Deladreue takes Hélinand to describe himself in the person of this youth, but the context seems to rule this out.

You accuse our Order of intolerable harshness; the fault here is not in the Order but in the accuser. . . What is more agreeable to nature than to live after an orderly fashion? but no life is more orderly than ours, where (as it is said in Wisdom, xi, 21) "all things are ordered in measure, and number, and weight." There food and rest and sleep are allowed in sufficiency as nature requireth. Fasts, labour and watchings are extorted from no man beyond his strength; all things are done measurably. . . Who cannot satisfy his hunger with wheaten bread and well-cooked pulse? . . . Thus one of our youths answered most excellently and prudently to the bishop of Beauvais, who asked him how it could be that he was healthier and comelier in the cloister than he had been wont to be in the world. "Because," said he, "I live uniformly and decently; the first makes me healthy and the second comely. In the world I lived a deformed and multiform life; from the first of these cometh foulness even of body, from the second, sickness." Then the bishop enquired of him farther, saying: "What then hast thou eaten today?" "Enough, my lord." "And yesterday?" "Enough again." "Nay, I ask not of the quantity but of the quality; what hast thou eaten yesterday and today?" "Yesterday I ate peas and potherbs; today, potherbs and peas; to-morrow I shall eat peas with my potherbs, and next day, potherbs with my peas." See now how fairly he took the bishop round that one sentence, showing in varied fashion the uniformity of his diet, which gives health and comeliness to the body.

Then Hélinand speaks of himself; not born to labour as a man but to flutter as a bird, yet made, by this "change of the right hand of the Most High," into a marvel unto all who ever knew him; seeing that this model of levity has now lived a steady Cistercian life for five years.

But behind all this lurked the monk's worst enemy—*acedia*, weariness bred of seclusion and monotony, with its sullen or passionate rebellion against the Rule. He was too often tempted to cry out, with those Israelites in the Wilderness, "our soul loatheth this light bread; who shall give us flesh to eat" (Caes. I, 249). At such moments, the yearning for flesh-food became almost uncontrollable; and Caesarius gives us glimpses which clearly explain the long and unsuccessful struggle, even on this holy ground of Cîteaux, against the fleshpots of Egypt. Five chapters of his fourth book deal with this temptation (82-6; cf. VI, 2-4). One example may suffice:

A certain lay brother, as I have heard from his own lips, was hearing

a private Mass, and slumbered for a while during the canon<sup>1</sup>. As he slept, he began by a diabolical illusion to gnaw the wood of the bench whereupon he had fallen forward, as though he were chewing food; and the sound of his teeth was as the grating sound of a mouse gnawing through a nutshell. Brother Richwin our cellarer, who was serving at that Mass, heard the sound and was hindered in his prayers. Afterwards, when he had an occasion of speaking with that lay brother, he asked him what he had between his teeth in Mass-time; "for" (said he) "I could not pray for the noise you made." "Believe me," answered the other, "I was eating good flesh." "And whence hadst thou that flesh?" "The devil," said he, "had prepared and put to my mouth, while the canon was being sung, a plate piled high with flesh. If thou believest me not, look upon the wood of the bench whereon I leaned, and thou shalt there find plain marks of my teeth." And he went on to tell how the devil had fooled him in his sleep; and in very deed the wood was gnawed with his teeth (I, 250).

Another monk, who had lived delicately before his conversion, confessed to Caesarius

that the devil tempted him much to gluttony, even when he slept but lightly in choir. One day, as he stood<sup>2</sup> in choir and closed his eyes for weariness, he was aware of a plateful of flesh under his nose; whereof he ate (as it seemed to him) as ravenously as a dog. Then, blushing to devour in this bestial fashion, he suddenly threw his head back, and smote it with painful force against the wall (*ibid.*). Oftentimes doth the devil tempt monks through flesh-meats, sleeping or waking, seen or unseen (I, 249).

All this, with the other allusions to be found in Caesarius, show that Heisterbach was still alive to the value of St Benedict's dietetic regulations. Monastic moralists of all the medieval centuries repeat, and repeat again, that the vegetarian restrictions of the Rule are necessary, if the cloister is to be kept clean.

It was gluttony (writes Caesarius) which impelled Sodom to its heinous sin; through gluttony fell the Israelites in the desert; "while the meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them"; the iniquity of Sodom was fulness of bread and abundance (I, 240). "What then?" asks the novice; "is it perilous for a monk to eat his fill of bread?" Caesarius replies, "What I said above of lentils, I say now of bread. . . . Our bread is coarse and black; wherefore it is rather a necessity of life than a superfluity, and methinks a monk sinneth

<sup>1</sup> The central and most solemn portion of the Mass, including the words of consecration.

<sup>2</sup> *I.e.* stood leaning upon the *miseri-cord* of his stall; or perhaps *stare* here, as often elsewhere in medieval Latin, is simply used for *esse*, "to be."

more in abhorring this bread, or in asking for fine bread, than in taking his fill of such as we have<sup>1</sup>. This temptation of [finer] bread is sometimes very grievous."

He goes on to tell the tale recorded in earlier Cistercian story, of the cleric who came as a novice to Clairvaux, and loathed the coarse barley-bread, until Christ appeared to him and dipped a piece in the wound of His side; "from which time the novice ate with great delight of that bread and of that common food which heretofore he had scarce been able to touch" (I, 248). Yet already by this time relaxation was growing in other monasteries. Humbert de Romans, Minister General of the Dominicans, writing almost in the same year as Caesarius, tells us that men "often," "as a frequent occurrence," came from a state of poverty to take the vows as lay brethren in the Cistercian Order for the livelihood's sake. He quotes the case of one who to the formal question at his profession: "Wherefore takest thou this vow upon thee?" replied with simple indiscretion: "To get white bread instead of black." Caesarius himself implies that such cases were common (I, 34).

And the Order's worst failing—a hard business policy, inclining to covetousness—was already clearly marked. As early as 1191, the General Chapter had tried to check further purchases of landed property, because "the Order has the reputation of never ceasing to add field to field, and the love of worldly goods has become a scandal"<sup>2</sup>. "Our Order," says the novice to Caesarius, "is often condemned by worldly folk for avarice" (I, 224); his master replies: "What they call avarice, we call prudence"; and he pleads the greatness of their charities, and the expenses entailed by the reception of fresh recruits.

In the earlier days, as we have seen, this excuse had been most abundantly justified; he gives some splendid and inspiring examples of monastic charity. In the Great Famine of 1197

our monastery, young and poorly endowed as it was, succoured many; and I have been told by those who beheld the multitude of poor folk at the gate that once we gave alms to fifteen hundred on a single day.

<sup>1</sup> The earliest Cistercian regulations prescribed whole-meal wheat bread; white was permitted only to the sick and to guests; sometimes also the brethren fell back upon rye-bread.

<sup>2</sup> See next chapter (No. xxvii).



To the parent abbey of Himmerode there fell at this moment a legacy of six hundred pounds, one hundred of which were earmarked for charity; out of the five remaining, only four were spent on buying land, the other hundred was spent on the poor. And Caesarius thinks that this would have succeeded even as a worldly investment; one abbey in Westphalia presently received double for all it had spent. The withdrawal of alms brought bad luck; a cellarer defrauded a widow, with the result that the abbey wine went sour, and a knight burned whole barns full of their corn; at Villers, on the same night on which the monks decided to restrict their charities in order to make sure of lasting through until next harvest, the fishpond burst, and did grievous damage to the buildings (I, 223-8). But Caesarius admits in the same breath that this plea of endowment for charity's sake does not altogether exonerate his brethren—*non de toto, sed de tanto*; and his admission gains even more significance from an incidental anecdote (I, 46). A noble and learned convert begged for admission to a Cistercian monastery under the guise of a poor scholar. "The brethren, seeing him clad in this old threadbare cloak, took him for a poor wandering scholar, and refused to receive him [as a novice]." It was only when he hinted that they might live to repent of their refusal, that they yielded at last to his importunity. And another tale shows how easily even an excellent monk might bring himself to justify continual acquisitions under the cloak of piety (I, 232). The novice says:

It cometh oftentimes to pass that great men get money or possessions by unjust means from such as are in subjection to them; from which money they build for the monks. May the Religious accept such alms as these, knowing their source? *M.* Whatsoever pricketh the conscience, polluteth the conscience. Yet know that such things come to pass sometimes by the just doom of God. . . Thus we read that He gave to the children of Israel the lands of the Canaanites and other unclean nations; yet these things must not be taken as examples; for the Religious should detest all greed and injustice. *N.* Yea, and we must the more carefully avoid scandal in these things, because worldly folk love not to have us cloisterers for their neighbours.

In another case, an abbot accepted all the goods of a dying usurer, who offered them on the express condition that the abbot should be responsible for his soul and should guarantee re-

mission of his sins. The bishop of the diocese, being consulted, approved the bargain, "on condition that you restore the treasures of my church [which he has in pawn]." The abbot took the dying man into his monastery; the brethren chanted lustily round his bier; the devils pleaded in vain for the man's soul against the angels, who "bare it off and joined it to their own company"; the abbot restored the goods as far as possible to their former possessors, gave liberal alms, and "converted the rest to the use of the brethren." This particular abbot, it is true, was only an ordinary Black Benedictine; but the moral is only too evident. And we need not wonder to read elsewhere

This year, when the ships of our Order dared not to pass beyond Zeeland for fear of pirates, it was noised abroad in Cologne that they had all been plundered; and some men said, "It is their just reward; the monks are greedy; they are merchants; God cannot suffer their covetousness"<sup>1</sup>.

Strive as we will for detachment, we are all more or less partisans of some party or other; but no man was ever more deliberately partisan than the monk. This was in many ways his strength, and in some ways his weakness. Few superstitions have grown more ineradicably into the human mind than that of the cowl. In the main it was no superstition, but an instinct of loyalty to discipline; the soldier's respect for his uniform. The worldly monk, it is true, might need to have the regulation forced upon him; a decree of Boniface VIII is incorporated in Canon Law, to the effect that any Religious who puts off his habit, even temporarily, without sufficient cause, is *ipso facto* excommunicated; thus the pope hopes to "abolish all perilous occasion of wandering abroad"<sup>2</sup>. But, to the earnest or even the average monk, such prohibitions were unnecessary, or at least they would have been in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. At that time of greater fervour, when it was still common to take the cowl *ad succurrendum*, respect for the cloth was almost a fetish-worship; even the most upright-living monk might find difficulties with St Peter if he went to heaven-gate without his marriage-garment. It was a clause of monastic self-denial, and not the lightest of such clauses, that the Religious should sleep

<sup>1</sup> II, 60. See more fully in my next chapter.

<sup>2</sup> *Decret. Sext.* lib. III, tit. xxiv, c. 2.

in the same garments by night and day, winter and summer alike: this it is which adds point to the dialogue between Hélinand and the bishop.

A few years ago, in a certain Cistercian abbey in France, a monk of good life lay sick of a fever; and, tormented by the double heat of his sickness and of the air, he besought the infirmarer to let him put off his cowl and put on his scapular<sup>1</sup>. The infirmarer, pitying the man's sufferings, granted his request, and went away for a while; on his return, he found that the monk had breathed his last. At this he was much troubled; and, closing the hall, he took off the man's scapular, clad him in a cowl, laid him thus attired on the mat, and beat the board<sup>2</sup>. Thence he was borne into the church. Next night, while the monks were chanting their customary psalms round the corpse, he sat upright on his bier and called unto them. All fled in terror to the dormitory, save only the prior, who was of more constant mind; to whom the monk said: "Fear not; I am your brother, who was dead and am alive; call me the abbot." Meanwhile the fleeing monks had noised it abroad that the dead man had risen; and there was great stir and concourse in the dormitory. When the abbot was come to the bier, the monk told his tale, saying: "My lord, I confess unto you that I died thus and thus. When the angels brought me to paradise, I thought to have entered freely in; but St Benedict came to the gate, saying, 'Who then art thou?' When I made answer that I was a Cistercian monk, the saint said, 'Nay! for if thou art a monk, where is thy habit? Here is the place of rest; wouldst thou enter in with thy garment of labour?' So I was left to wander round the walls of that mansion of bliss, where I saw through the windows certain most reverend seniors; one of whom I besought to intercede on my behalf, for he seemed more benignant than the rest. At his intervention, I have been permitted to return again to my body, that I may thus receive my habit from thee, and merit to enter in unto the promised bliss." The abbot, hearing this, took off the cowl wherein he lay, and put on that which he had cast off in his sickness; and the monk, having received his blessing, expired once more. The monastery wherein these things came to pass is called Szere [*sic*]; the abbot of Relaxhausen told us this miracle on his way by our house; he said that he had heard it from the prior and monks of the aforesaid monastery (II, 298; cf. II, 16).

Such being the virtue of the habit, we need not wonder at that multiplicity of *ad succurrendum* conversions during the monastic

<sup>1</sup> The much lighter garment which the Cistercian wore for field-labour.

<sup>2</sup> A dying monk was laid on a mat of sackcloth and ashes; a board was then beaten like a gong, and the brethren left their occupations to gather and chant psalms round the deathbed.

revivals of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was from such conversions, and from the burials of wealthy folk, that the monasteries got some of their richest windfalls; not that the converts thus privileged were invariably wealthy, but the records give abundant evidence that the large majority were so. It was a dangerous system, however, as Caesarius well knew (I, 84).

There are many folk in the world whom I have known well, who pledged themselves to our abbot in their times of sickness, when they feared to die, and who, when they recovered, brake their vow. Last year, at Bonn, a certain wandering clerk named Nicholas, whom they call the Archpoet, was grievously sick of a fever; and, fearing to die, he moved our abbot to admission to our Order partly through his own prayers and partly through the canons of Bonn. But, to be brief, though he put on the cowl, as we thought, with great contrition, yet, when his sickness was past, he put it off still more hastily, and, casting it from him not without a certain mockery, fled away.

But these were the unsteadfast; these had their place with the apostates of whom we get occasional glimpses; it is pretty plain that the majority of Caesarius's time were steadfast and contented on the whole, for they had come to a living and beneficent house. In that quiet Petersdale under the Stromberg, shaded by the Beeches and watered by the Beck which gave their names to Heisterbach, our novice-master and his fellows prepared themselves daily for eternity, and civilized the neighbourhood by their example. Their first abbot, in a vision, had seen the wild Petersthal as a valley of dry bones, "by which [the Holy Spirit] signified those secular folk, devoid of spiritual grace, who in this valley have been converted to a religious life" (II, 159). The mountain beck reminded the monks of their Order, "flowing in a clear volume through the purity of its traditions, and impetuously by the fervour of its prayers." So, day by day, the Heisterbach ran down into the Rhine, and the Rhine flowed past under the Seven Mountains with that broad majestic current, unhesitating and unrelenting, which nobody who has once seen and loved can ever forget.

We cannot attribute to our good novice-master any special joy or pride in this romantic scenery; to him, as to all natural village-folk, level pastures and rich cornfields were more delicious than mountains and torrents. If the wild hills and forests of

today "do take a sober colouring from the eye which hath kept watch o'er man's mortality," to the eye of the average medieval moralist they took something of the lurid colours of hell.

Dost thou know the castles of Wolkenburg and Drachenfels? By my faith, if those castles were made of steel, and their two mountains of steel, and if all were cast into the place where the soul of the [lately-deceased William] count of Jülich now is, before thou couldst wink with thine eye, they would be molten down. And this is but his milk-bath; some future day, when his soul shall find his body again, then shall he first receive his full punishment.

So said a devil in visible form to "one Walter, a noble knight, most devoted to our abbey and our Order" (II, 318). Medieval religion was strongly dualistic; and Caesarius, as we have seen, was penetrated with this dualism. *Mundus totus in maligno positus est*—as St John wrote long ago, the whole world is seated in wickedness; the one Ark is the Church, and the cloister is the safest corner of that Ark. Within are the converted; "without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Sheltered from such as these the converted may, on the whole, remain placidly tranquil in faith, in prayer, and in frequent signings of the cross, which generally suffice to distinguish between heavenly visions and diabolic phantasmagoria. These Heisterbach prayers might not flow with the torrential force of the earliest days: Caesarius might have disclaimed the passionate inspiration of those lines of Verhaeren:

Ils tombent à genoux sur la froideur des dalles  
Et jettent vers leur Dieu tout le sang de leur cœur.

But, on the other hand, he was not yet conscious of serious decay. He was not, like Thomas of Eccleston, one who had known personally some of the pioneers of his Order, and who was thus compelled to contrast the somewhat jog-trot pace of his own day with the prolific fervour of the first beginnings. The general impression he gives us is that which we get from his earlier contemporary, the novice-master of Rievaulx. The barbarities of the medieval world cannot be altogether kept out of the cloister, nor its temptations either; but the athlete of God, as time goes on, gains both positively in energy and negatively in prudence. Over some things he has attained to definite

mastery; to others he becomes more thick-skinned; in some real sense he has now found God and his own soul; for the rest, he no longer cries for the moon. So far as repose is possible to any sensitive mind, he has already entered into his Sabbath Rest. Here is comparative peace, material and spiritual, in retirement from an unrestful world; here is real self-denial, steady devotion to beneficent duties, and a serene religious expectation of the final reward, when for Caesarius also the mat and ashes should be spread, and the brethren should assemble to chant him through his death-agony, and he should go down to his fathers wrapped in the grey cowl which had been his armour through life.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### COMMERCIALISM AND DECAY

WE have seen how the comparison of Caesarius with other contemporary records leaves no doubt that, in his anxiety to give his own novices an exact picture of the life that lay before them, he has left us a very true and life-like picture of cloister thoughts and cloister works. We must remember, of course, that Heisterbach stood certainly a little, and probably a good deal, above even the Cistercian average. But, with all allowances, the documents leave no doubt that the average Cistercian of 1250 had still enough of his predecessor's spirit to make him a very real factor in medieval civilization; and, further, that the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, and other new Orders had really provoked many of the older houses to a healthy rivalry in good works. By the sixteenth century, however, there was not very much difference between the Cistercian and the Benedictine or Cluniac; and we must now trace that downward course. For the Order in general, this has been done very briefly by d'Arbois, who utilizes the General Chapter Acts in Martène's *Thesaurus*; the still briefer account which I shall here give may easily be verified by reference to him and to the Acts themselves under the years indicated<sup>1</sup>. If, not only in this and in the succeeding chapter, but once or twice again in the course of this work, I seem to accumulate documentary evidence to a needless and wearisome extent, the reader can easily take this warning and pass on. But, so long as certain elementary and essential facts are not only seriously contradicted, but often actually ignored altogether, with an air of superior knowledge and engaging candour, so long will it be necessary, in any history which aims at thoroughness, to put these things beyond reasonable dispute, within the limits within which the documents supply practical certainties. A reviewer in a respectable journal has recently accused me, not indeed of falsifying my documents, but of falsi-

<sup>1</sup> If the year alone is given, the reference is to Martène's collection; (W) and (F) refer to Winter's and Fowler's respectively.

fying the general evidence by partial and dexterous selection from my original sources<sup>1</sup>. That is an impression very naturally produced on a mind unwilling to admit certain conclusions, and not well-informed enough on this special subject to judge how far the author's selections would be corroborated by the totality of available contemporary records. To such a mind, the pressure of unwelcome facts will naturally suggest a suspicion of arbitrary choice; and, in the face of this and similar accusations, I must try to convince the public, as I myself have long been convinced, that history is not a matter of successful card-shuffling, and that those who thus treat it will never enjoy, for more than a few brief decades at most, the attention of thoughtful and candid readers.

Satirists, from very early times, accused the Cistercians of commercialism and greed. In this the new-comers resembled the Society of Friends, and many other religious reformers. Their thrift and hard work and regularity of life would, by themselves, have brought worldly prosperity, quite apart from the lavish generosity of their early benefactors<sup>2</sup>. In reclaiming waste and draining swamps they were certainly among the pioneers of their century, though even this is sometimes exaggerated, and it is not always borne in mind that by far the greater part of the actual work was done by lay-brethren and hired labourers. The Cistercians were pioneers also of sheep-farming on the capitalist scale. St Bernard would have had scant sympathy with these enormous extensions of financial responsibility and concomitant entanglements in worldly business; in fact he protested against the first signs of this commercialism in words which have been recorded by Giraldus Cambrensis (*Spec. Ecclesiae*, R.S. p. 223):

Once, on [St Bernard's] return from the Chapter General at Cîteaux, he noted that the abbots did not bear him company at his departure,

<sup>1</sup> *Athenaeum*, May 2, 1919. "It is an occasion for despair to find a scholar who can dip into medieval literature for the extract he requires with the facility of a conjurer eliciting the missing card from a pack, content to employ this capacity for such tediously controversial ends."

<sup>2</sup> If I here dismiss this very important subject of Cistercian contributions to progress so briefly, it is because writers of all schools have long treated it as a commonplace, and it has found its way even into school histories. Valuable reflections on the Cistercians as pioneers of business methods in agriculture and commerce may be found in Pirenne, *Hist. Belg.* I, 171 n., 277 ff.; E. Kalischer, *Handelsgeschichte der Klöster* (Berlin, 1911), pp. 14-5; and Winter, I, 99 ff.



as they had done in former years; at which he marvelled and enquired the cause. It was answered, that the abbots were now lingering round the papal legate, who had been present at the Chapter, in order to obtain pontifical letters and confirmations of privileges to the profit each of his own monastery. Whereunto Bernard replied, sighing sore from the depth of his breast, "O God most excellent! so long as the holiness of our Order was of itself enough to protect its dignity and to defend its goods and possessions from all trespass, so long was the state of our Order worthily commendable and sincere; but, now that it seeks to trench and support itself with the favour of outsiders, or commissions or confirmations and privileges, this, alas! is a too manifest and undeniable token and proof that the Order is decaying and deteriorating while its greed and ambition increase<sup>1</sup>.

St Bernard here had all the traditions of the Order at his back; it had been one of the fundamental principles of Cîteaux, at its very foundation, to mark this difference between the *novum lignum* and the older monasteries.

Seeing that they read neither in St Benedict's Rule nor in his Life that this doctor [of the Church] possessed churches or altar-dues or oblations or burial-fees or tithes of other men, or ovens or mills or manors or serfs, or that women ever entered into his monasteries, or that he ever buried dead folk therein except his own sister, therefore they renounced all these things. Whereas the blessed father Benedict teacheth that the monk should make himself a stranger to secular doings, thereby doth he clearly testify that these things should not be dealt with in the acts or the hearts of monks, who ought, fleeing from these things, to be true to the etymology of their name<sup>2</sup>.

And, so long as the Bernardine impulse was still strong, the General Chapter fought hard against all forms of commercialism<sup>3</sup>. In 1191 it forbade the acquisition of certain forms of property which, frequent as they were in the Middle Ages, reposed upon invidious feudal privileges or actual robbery of the parishes: such

<sup>1</sup> Similar plain speech on this subject may be found in the saint's own writings, e.g. Ep. 385, § 4; *Super Missus est*, hom. 4, § 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Exordium Parvum*, in Guignard, p. 71. The editor shows good reason for believing that this profession of renewed monastic faith was drawn up by St Stephen Harding himself, and ratified by Calixtus II in 1119 (p. xxx).

<sup>3</sup> This chapter was written before I had had the good fortune to meet with E. Hoffmann's article on the subject in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, vol. 31 (1910), pp. 699 ff. This Roman Catholic writer concludes in the same sense as his fellow-Catholic d'Arbois, but works out the subject in far fuller detail; it seemed best, therefore, to leave my own conclusions as they stood and only to supplement them here and there from Hoffmann's contributions to the evidence.

were tithe-rents, appropriations of parish churches, serfs, and mills<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, it forbade even the farther acquisition of lands and houses, because "the Order has the reputation of never ceasing to add field to field, and the love of worldly goods has become a scandal." Some of the men who issued this decree may well have actually seen and spoken with St Bernard; yet the private records of Clairvaux show that even there, in the saint's own home, the prescription was violated 48 times between 1191 and 1248 (when it was at last repealed), apart from evasions of the law under cover of free gifts, etc.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the repetition of the decree by the General Chapter of 1215 testifies to its inoperative character in other houses. All this time, similar abuses had grown in the matter of tolls, customs and tithes. Such dues had originally been remitted to a society of starveling saints aspiring to live by the labour of their own hands; the privilege now proved a powerful weapon in the hands of a great and ubiquitous business-community; the Cistercians could now drive an extensive trade under conditions which gave their toll-free emissaries an enormous advantage over other competitors. In the twelfth century *Consuetudines*, chapter 51 begins: "There are many complaints concerning our merchants, and much confusion"; the Chapter attempts legislative remedies; it is forbidden, *inter alia*, to sell wine by retail<sup>3</sup>. In 1210, the abbey of Bergues is competing unfairly with layfolk in the leather trade, under cover of ecclesiastical privileges (W). In 1214-5, renewal of the prohibition to buy landed estates. In 1269, there is an attempt to restrict wine-trade in the Order (F). In 1286, usurious bargains are forbidden; it is decreed that the prohibitions

<sup>1</sup> The mill was one of the most universal and invidious of feudal monopolies; the *cahiers* of 1789 show that it stood in the front rank of those injustices which led to the Revolution. The people, being unable to get their corn ground elsewhere than at the manor mill, had no legal remedy against neglect and robbery. The St Albans monastic annalist himself shows the importance attached to the free mill as one of the first steps in emancipation from feudal oppression: see Froude, *Annals of an English Abbey*, in vol. III of his *Short Studies*. Hoffmann shows, however, by concrete instances, how difficult it was for the abbeys to refuse such gifts (pp. 705-6).

<sup>2</sup> D'Arbois, p. 293; cf. 295. Hoffmann admits that the chief hindrances to the enforcement of this law lay in "the steadily-increasing acquisitive spirit of the abbeys" (p. 706). In 1360, one of the articles stolen from a Cistercian abbey, not of the first rank, was *a golden chalice* (Eckertz, II, 381). Another golden chalice was stolen from Kirkstall about 1200 A.D. (Dugdale-Caley, v, 597).

<sup>3</sup> Guignard, p. 264.

in chapter 51 of the *Consuetudines* must really be enforced<sup>1</sup> (F). In 1274, the Chapter lends a lay-brother as business man to the Duke of Lorraine (W). If detailed prohibitions gradually die out of the Chapter records, this is not because they have produced their effect but because of their uselessness; for this we have a pope's evidence. Benedict XII, himself a Cistercian, in his reforming constitutions of 1335, cites his own experience as conclusive for the "very many" points which call for amendment. He

is specially desirous to provide against those monks and lay brethren of the said Order who, forgetful of their own soul's health, heaping up money against the precepts of the Rule, have bought and still do buy, or have caused and do cause to be bought, rights and possessions and rents and pensions and animals and other goods, sometimes under their own and often under borrowed names, with reinforcement of many other legal fictions, and give out their beasts to be fed by others and to be restored to themselves or to some other with augmentation or lucre<sup>2</sup>, either in their name or on their behalf, and enter into many other contracts as traders; moreover, seeking and following after filthy lucre, they hide and unlawfully keep back their money, to the peril of their own souls.

For this, Benedict decrees severe punishment, as also for "all monks and lay brethren, even when charged with administrations, who lend out money or other goods to any persons whatsoever, or who feign debts which they do not owe." But there was no real use in forbidding again what had been forbidden for centuries; and in 1375 we find a pope himself "granting, of his own private authority, to the abbey [of Clairmarais, one of St Bernard's favourite foundations], exception from all sorts of taxes"; in other words, privileges behind which the monks could

<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann (pp. 707-8) shows clearly the natural steps by which the abbeys were tempted into these transactions which the medieval church condemned as usurious. The prohibition (he notes) was often ineffectual in these cases (p. 710). W. Meyer explains the transactions which led to the frequent prohibitions of speculative dealings which bore, by medieval interpretation, a usurious character. (*Zwei Gedichte u.s.w.* from *Nachrichten d. k. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, 1908, pp. 397-8.) A concrete instance similar to those which he quotes may be found in the *Coucher Book of Kirkstall* (Thoresby Soc. vol. VIII), p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Such contracts were condemned by strict church law as usurious, since they depended upon speculative contingencies; this is why the Cistercians often worked behind borrowed names or legal fictions. The "feigned debt" was another well-known trick for concealing usurious practices.

undersell secular folk<sup>1</sup>. It is very probable that we may trace, in two additions made to Canon Law during this period for the purpose of restricting monastic trading, a definite struggle of the authorities against this irresistible movement<sup>2</sup>. We, in this age, may say *irresistible*, because Hoffmann's elaborate study of this subject is thus summed up by Dom Ursmer Berlière, a Benedictine of our own day who has made solid and valuable contributions to the medieval history of his own Order<sup>3</sup>:

The Cistercians could not escape from the laws which govern society and modify economic principles. We see a real conflict between the constitutional principles of the Order; even those who decree a return to the original principles are obliged, in practice, to tolerate the transgression of those decrees... Until 1150 the Order remained faithful to the *Carta Caritatis* and the statutes of 1134; after the middle of the twelfth century, it was already found necessary to struggle for the maintenance of the ancient principles, to tolerate exceptions, and to widen the concepts, especially in the matter of tithes and mortgages. The early thirteenth century marks a fresh economic phase, characterized by the circulation of money, the exodus of peasants from villages to towns, and the scarcity of labour; it became necessary to farm the lands out. All the earlier system now breaks down<sup>4</sup>. By the end of the thirteenth century, the Cistercians are no longer differentiated from the other Orders.

The attitude of the General Chapter of Cîteaux in forbidding the Franciscans to settle at Scarborough, lest this should affect the revenues which the Cistercians there enjoyed from tithes, provoked the Franciscan archbishop Pecham to write of them as "demoniac monks"<sup>5</sup>.

In the matter of food, we soon find endowments for "pittances" creeping in: these extras of fish and sweets and wine sometimes amount to a greater yearly sum than would have defrayed the whole cost of an early monk. There was no point on which the early Cistercian prided himself more than on his return to

<sup>1</sup> *Mém. Soc. Ant. de la Morinie*, xi, 334.

<sup>2</sup> Decrees of Alexander III (about 1170 A.D.) in *Decret. Greg.* lib. iii, tit. 1, cc. 3, 6; monks forbidden to practise as physicians and lawyers or to trade for money.

<sup>3</sup> *Revue Bénédictine*, 1911, p. 367\*.

<sup>4</sup> For the decay of the lay-brother system, see *Chron. de Melsa*, R.S. iii, xliii ff. Martène found only a few stray survivals of the system on his wide tour among the French abbeys: cf. his *Voyage Littéraire*, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> A. G. Little, *Studies*, etc. pp. 93-5.

the original Benedictine prohibition of butcher's meat; yet the Chapter Acts show infringement here even in Bernard's lifetime (1152). Such notices become frequent; and a satirist of about 1200 makes the Cluniac retort upon the Cistercian: "Though your brethren fear to use flesh in public, yet they shrink not from the abuse of eating it in secret"<sup>1</sup>. Nor was it satirists alone who wrote thus; the canonist John of Ayton repeats it a century later in formal prose:

Which, I ask, is the graver transgression in the matter of flesh-eating? that of the Black Monks, who eat it openly, or of the White Monks, who (as it is said) often eat it secretly to repletion? For both have the same Benedictine Rule.

Some, he says, blame the Black Monks most, as causing the more open scandal; but he himself thinks the hidden scandal is still worse<sup>2</sup>. In 1209, the General Chapter had decreed "that the precept of the Rule concerning flesh food be more strictly kept; let abbots, as well as monks, abstain therefrom unless they be actually sick or infirm"<sup>3</sup>. Benedict XII, in 1335, had to meet the difficulty that flesh-eating is now pleaded as an established custom which has created a sort of prescriptive right (*Constit.* § 22). About 1360, at Heiligenkreuz, the official visitors do not venture to forbid flesh-eating, but only try to moderate it<sup>4</sup>. In 1381, the papal legate in England, among other illicit indulgences for money,

refused not the Cistercians' gift of £50, together with other gifts, in consideration whereof he graciously granted them a general licence for eating flesh indiscriminately outside their monasteries, as they had been accustomed to eat it within their precincts<sup>5</sup>.

In 1499, the abbey of Camp repaired and adapted a chamber to be used after the Benedictine fashion as a misericord, "in virtue of the papal indulgence to eat flesh"<sup>6</sup>. The site of the misericord for flesh-eating at Fountains is clearly traceable, about half way between the kitchen and the infirmary. Already in 1429 the General Chapter had found itself compelled to fulminate against

<sup>1</sup> *Poems of W. Mapes*, C.S. p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, appendix p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> *Nomast. Cist.* (Solesmes), p. 276. There are frequent edicts in other collections.

<sup>4</sup> *Stud. u. Mit.* XXI, 391.

<sup>5</sup> Eckertz, *Fontes*, II, 418.

<sup>6</sup> Walsingham, R.S. I, 452.

very many—*quamplures*—monks and nuns of our Order, unmindful of their own souls' health, who hold, at their own will, in private chambers, extraordinary feastings—*commessiones*—with secular folk and others, at the hours whereat the community are wont and have hitherto been accustomed to dine or sup; in which chambers they eat and drink and fear not to perpetrate other dishonest things contrary to Cistercian regulations, to the opprobrium of the Order, the scandal of the people, and the detriment of souls.

Henceforth, all are to eat "regular food and other pittances" in the refectory. The decree was repeated on three other occasions in the next three years; a testimony to its inefficacy. It must be remembered that medieval Benedictine moralists (so far as I know, without exception) insist on the necessity of abstinence from flesh-foods as a normal condition of healthy monastic life.

Long before this eating in private parlours, the abuse of private cells had crept in, and fireplaces in the dormitories. In 1244 the foundation of a Cistercian college at Paris marked a breach in the rule of strict claustration<sup>1</sup>. In 1335, Benedict XII's reforms compelled these Cistercian students to take an oath that they would not spend extravagantly on feasts and robes for their doctor's degree. We frequently find that most certain indication of loose discipline—the multiplication of small "cells," or out-lying houses, in which two or three monks lived alone; "Synagogues of Satan," St Bernard had called them. At last, in the fifteenth century, most of the Continental houses succumbed to the *commendam* system, under which the titular abbots were absentees, sometimes not even monks, who cared nothing for the discipline of the monastery and were concerned only to fleece it. In England, the *commendam* system had only begun to come in just before the Dissolution; on the Continent, even the Counter-Reformation did not succeed in getting rid of it; for this "system of confiscation in disguise, more disastrous than the confiscation of 1790," was tolerated by the popes<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> We have seen that the founder of this college, Stephen of Lexington, an otherwise admirable abbot of Clairvaux, is said to have been deposed for this violation of original principles (d'Arbois, p. 181). There is much to be said for the innovation; but nobody who knows Paris student life of that century will minimize its importance as a landmark.

<sup>2</sup> D'Arbois, *l.c.* p. 160. D'Arbois might have put it more strongly; the popes sometimes actually imposed the abuse upon the unwilling Order; see Gen. Chap. Statutes for 1466, § 3, and the details I give in Chapter xxviii.

But there are two essential points of discipline which deserve more detailed treatment. The preamble to Henry VIII's Act of Suppression for the smaller monasteries bases the necessity for this measure upon the two specific allegations of vicious living and of wasteful mismanagement. Equal stress is laid by Henry upon both these counts, and it is added that, in spite of "many continual visitations... by the space of two hundred years and more... yet nevertheless little or none amendment is hitherto had" (27 Hen. VIII, ch. 28). Let us verify Cistercian decadence under these two heads.

Already in 1181, the General Chapter blushed to report that a Hungarian monastery had run into debt in order to procure wine. In 1182 the Chapter notes: "It is notorious that excessive debts result not only in peril but in imminent ruin to many—*pluribus*—monasteries." In 1188 this is repeated, with a provision that no house which owed 50 marks or more should buy new lands, or build, till it had paid its debts. Next year, it is complained that many houses are in debt to usurers, with whom all further dealings are forbidden<sup>1</sup>. In 1227 "many monasteries of our Order are oppressed with debts in many lands, and specially in France." In 1245 the General Chapter still owed money to the usurers; in 1256 we find certain monasteries and nunneries provided with licences to beg; in 1257 the debts of the Order are found to be very serious, and the blame is thrown on the Enemy of Mankind. Yet it can scarcely be pleaded that the devil had here to deal with a folk whose unworldliness made them an easy prey; for in 1246 the Chapter was obliged to "decree, under pain of deposition and expulsion, that no person of this Order presume to purchase Saracen women as concubines to their Saracen slaves, for any cause whatsoever." Debts come to the fore again in 1260, 1261, 1262, 1269 (even Cîteaux, the mother-house, is *oppressa magnis debitis*), 1270, 1274, 1276 (some abbeys had to disperse their monks among

<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann shows in detail the significance of these prohibitions (pp. 712-3). The natural desire to round off estates and make them into more profitable agricultural units—in other words, the attractions of capitalism—tempted the monks, when they lacked cash at the favourable moment for purchase, to venture these territorial extensions on borrowed money. In those days, when the borrower had often to pay from 33 to 43 per cent., the purchase must be profitable indeed to justify this initial risk.

other houses), 1277, 1278 (where the decree implies frequency of debt), 1279, 1280, 1281, 1282. In 1289, special honours were decreed for all abbots who should succeed in paying off their predecessor's debts. In 1293, measures are taken against the concealment of debts. In 1303, the whole Order is *magnis debitis et diversis creditoribus obligatus*; a commission is appointed to find some remedy. Between 1306 and 1318 there is a lacuna in the MS. In 1322, we find a fresh commission, to deal with "the restoration of the monasteries of our Order, miserably ravaged by the whirlpool of usury." In 1330, the Chapter attempts to remedy the abuse that very many—*plurimi*—abbots,

who have resigned after destroying their monasteries, which they have oppressed beyond all sufferance with various burdens, usuries, debts and immoderate pensions, have not been duly punished on that account—nay, rather, sometimes enjoy, however unduly and unjustly, annual pensions and liberties and favours.

Here comes a much longer gap in Martène's MS., until 1387: but the MS. printed by F. Winter enables us to extend the catalogue of debts by decrees published in 1268, 1308 (2), 1313 (secret debts, the cause of very great—*quamplurimum*—evils); 1312 and 1320, furtive alienations of property; 1326 usurious debts; 1343, elaborate arrangements for the temporary dispersion of hopelessly indebted congregations. In 1387, when Martène's MS. begins again, we find the Chapter grappling with "the vast burdens of the Order, and the almost unbearable load of debts." In 1390, a levy of 12,000 florins was demanded to pay off the general load of debt. In 1392, even recourse to the secular arm is threatened for enforcement of payment; a desperate measure which can only be appreciated by those who have fully gauged the Cistercian horror of all intervention from without (cf. an. 1437, § 14). In 1393 we get a long list of defaulting abbots. In 1418 the Chapter is concerned for "the reformation of our whole Order, which is in many ways decayed—*multipliciter collapsi*—both spiritually and financially." In 1426 even stronger language is used concerning the English and Welsh Cistercian houses. In 1444 measures are taken against the "grievous difficulties frequently arising" from the practice of incurring debts and obligations under fictitious or fraudulent excuses; similar measures were



decreed again in 1448. In 1477 the debts of the Order as such (exclusive of the sums separately owed by individual monasteries) amounted to 25,000 florins, roughly equivalent to £30,000 sterling in 1914. In 1502 the Order is described as caught in the whirlpool of the commendam system which "daily, throughout the world, brings on the dilapidation of monasteries and the depravation of morals." The series of Chapter Acts ceases altogether with the year 1547; and, even thus, there are very serious gaps in the last 20 years.

Nor can it be pleaded, as we have already noted in passing, that the monks were in debt because they lived as idealists in a materialistic world. Sometimes, at least, they had recourse to the same questionable artifices for raising money which had been reproached against other Orders. At one time, they went round begging with relics<sup>1</sup>; again, a surviving account-book of later date shows them selling "rings of St Bernard," holding frequent and lucrative church-ales, receiving money from the hearing of confessions, and sending a begging brother round the district almost after the fashion of a Mendicant Order<sup>2</sup>. And perhaps the greatest and justest cause of their unpopularity was their papal exemption from tithes. As a concession to a small and struggling community of Religious who lived by their own field-labour, this had been natural enough; but, when the average Cistercian had become a richer man than the average parson, this refusal of tithe led to serious and long-protracted quarrels, appeals to Rome with various results, and a final concordat in which the Order had to abandon a good deal of its claims<sup>3</sup>.

Such is the testimony of the General Chapter Acts; and it will be seen how closely this evidence accords with the gloomy admissions of the learned Cistercian, Julian Paris, who in 1664 compiled the *Nomasticon Cisterciense*. Speaking of Charles VIII's attempts to reform the French monasteries at his general synod of Tours in 1493, Paris writes: "In these most wretched times,

<sup>1</sup> At Jüterbog, in 1286; there are similar entries in the Mariawald accounts (see next note) e.g. pp. 61, 62, 63, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Rechnungen des Cisterzienserklosters Mariawald aus dem Ende des 15 Jhdts*, in *Zeitschrift d. Bergischen Geschichtsvereins*, vol. 32 (1896), pp. 57 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The story is fully told by Hoffmann, *l.c.* pp. 715 ff.

not only the Cistercians but almost all the monastic Orders were hastening downhill to ruin, and stood in the most urgent need of reform." And the same writer, coming to the next generation, sums up: "From 1500 to 1615, there was scarce any order within our Order"<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Nomast. Cist.* 1892, pp. vii, 547.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### THE ETERNAL FEMININE

**E**VEN more significant, if possible, is the other line of enquiry. From the earliest times, all monastic disciplinarians had excluded women from the precincts. To plead (as is sometimes pleaded now) that only a prurient Protestant imagination could lay great stress on this point, is to ignore the whole mass of medieval evidence. The two great collections to which we turn at once for records of this kind (though scattered evidence may be found everywhere among the medieval records) are those of the two great Benedictine scholars Martène and Haeften. Haeften's disquisition on the subject may be gauged by its opening words<sup>1</sup>:

So great are the seductions of the inferior sex, and so great is the peril which these cause to the superior sex, that both Holy Scripture and the Fathers seem to forbid all communication between the opposite sexes. Such texts may be found everywhere; let one or two suffice here [quotations from Jerome, Basil, and *Vitaspatrum*]. For these and other reasons, many—*plerique*—of the holy fathers have excluded all women from all monasteries of monks.

St Fiacre obtained from God that any woman entering his cloister of Meaux, to all time, should be visited with divine vengeance; at Fulda in 1165 not even the Empress was admitted to pray in the church; and when, two centuries later, Boniface IX granted an indulgence admitting women on a few great days of the year to worship there, the church was struck by lightning and consumed (A.D. 1398).

Martène, in his *Commentary on the Rule*, fills twelve closely-printed quarto pages (153-64) with quotations and examples from medieval documents. There is no safety but in flight. He quotes from *Vitaspatrum* and St Bernard: "Salt cometh from water; yet salt, if we bring water to it, is at once dissolved and wasted; so also is the monk born of woman, yet, if he come nigh

<sup>1</sup> Martène deals with the subject under chapter 4 of the Rule; Haeften in his *Disquisitiones Monasticae*, lib. xi, disq. 3 (Antwerp, 1644, p. 986).

unto a woman, he also is dissolved, and his latter end is that he is no monk." "To be always with a woman, and not to sin with her, is not this more than to raise the dead to life?" Therefore "there is no doubt that women were always forbidden access to men's monasteries; the ancient monastic Rules bear witness to this." Here follow four pages of quotations from different monastic Rules and decrees of church synods; after which Martène collects 27 examples of famous monasteries to show that, wherever the Rule was strictly kept, this prohibition also was upheld in actual practice, and even the nave of the monastic churches was closed to women. The Cistercians, finding it impossible in charity to deny all hospitality to women, entertained them in a house outside and separate from the monastery<sup>1</sup>.

Such, to the end of the Middle Ages and beyond, was the theory of all monks and nuns, and such was the practice of the stricter houses, though on a diminishing scale of stringency. A scene like that on p. 394 of Monsignor Benson's *The King's Achievement*, where a monk and a girl talk quite naturally together "alone in the oak parlour, before supper," is simply an importation of modern conditions into pre-Reformation England. The thing happened often enough under lax conditions; but, in the Middle Ages, only a satirist could have treated it thus as a matter of course; to the disciplinarian, it would have been odious and criminal. Under at least three monastic codes, to have spoken alone with a woman was an offence of which the statutory penalty was fixed at from 100 to 200 stripes<sup>2</sup>. In early Cistercian days, women were felt to be out of place even in the solemn outdoor religious processions; the mixture of the sexes introduced a spirit of levity, if nothing worse<sup>3</sup>. But the General Chapter records show how impossible it was to maintain this tabu even in the strictest Orders. The *Instituta* of 1134 direct:

Putting away all occasions either of increasing or of keeping food for us, or of washing any possessions of the monastery when necessity demands, all our monks and lay brethren are absolutely forbidden to

<sup>1</sup> Haeften alludes to this, *l.c.* p. 987. The beautiful little church of Tilty in Essex was originally the chapel of such an extramural hostel.

<sup>2</sup> Martène, *l.c.* p. 164. "Qui solus cum sola femina, sine personis certis, familiariter loquitur, maneat sine cibo, vel duobus diebus in pane et aqua, vel decentis plagis" (decree of St Columban).

<sup>3</sup> *Herbertus de Miraculis* (P.L. vol. 185 bis, col. 1298).

live together with women, wherefore these are allowed neither to lodge within the precincts of our granges nor to enter the monastery gate<sup>1</sup>.

In the *Instituta* of about 1156, and in the General Chapter decrees of 1157 the strict rule is relaxed to the extent of permitting women to enter newly-dedicated churches for the first nine days. A study of similar relaxations tends to show that this was in order to secure the full advantage of the offerings, which were always more generously given at such exceptional times. In the same year the assembled fathers are scandalized to find that some monasteries employ milkmaids. In 1185 the Cistercians, like other Orders, are forbidden to act as godfathers or to baptize infants: such engagements brought them too much into contact with lay folk of both sexes. The prohibition has to be repeated next year; and in 1190

the abbot of Stürzelbronn, in whose house a child was baptized, and women entered when he was in the house, is to be punished at the discretion of the abbots of Ferté and Mézières; and the officials [of the abbey] by whose counsel the thing was done, are to fast every Friday on bread and water.

That same year,

the abbot of Sta Maria della Colomba, who allowed benedictions to be made in his house, and women to come in, shall be six days under the lighter punishment, on one of which he shall fast on bread and water; and he shall give up the oblations at the next meeting of the Chapter. Let others take warning from this; and let the guilty give up the offerings to the Chapter<sup>2</sup>.

Two other abbots were punished at the same time for allowing women into their monasteries. In 1192, a whole convent was punished with stripes and fasting for the same offence: the abbot of another was punished for admitting women. In 1193, the abbot of Salem is punished for having buried a lady within his church; here, again, the financial temptation is obvious, since

<sup>1</sup> Manrique, *Annales Cistercienses*, I, 273. These different codes were so often retouched that it is not always possible to date any particular clause exactly.

<sup>2</sup> The *benedictiones* here spoken of were apparently offerings developed from the ancient custom of distributing *pain bénit* among the faithful after Mass; see Ducange, s.v. *benedictio* and *eulogia*. The main point is clear: women had been allowed to enter, as on the dedication-days, for the sake of their offerings.

rich folk's funerals always brought rich presents<sup>1</sup>. Yet the abbey of Clairmarais near St-Omer, a house dear to St Bernard, was remarkable in later years for the number of great ladies whose tombs might be seen in its church. Nor was it only after death that they found their way to this hallowed and forbidden ground<sup>2</sup>. In 1193, the same Chapter which punished the abbot of Salem for that burial found itself compelled to legislate severely against more formidable encroachments. It decreed:

If it come to pass that women enter any abbey of our Order with the abbot's consent, he shall be deposed by his father-abbot<sup>3</sup> without hope of recall. Whosoever shall have brought them in without leave, let him be expelled from the house, never to return but by decree of the General Chapter. And, howsoever the women may have entered, let no divine service be celebrated in that abbey so long as they are within the walls.

In 1194 (W) there was another case. In 1217 the abbot of Tintern was accused of allowing women to lodge hard by the gate of one of his granges and to share in the work of the grange itself<sup>4</sup>. In 1220, it was reported that nuns had chanted in the choir of Savigny on the dedication-days and had eaten in the refectory; monks of Fontaines, on the other hand, were reported to have chanted in a nunnery choir and eaten with the nuns. In 1222, a supplication was sent to the pope "that he compel us not to send our monks or lay brethren to live in nunneries and provide for their temporal affairs; for this matter tendeth to the prejudice of the Order and the peril of souls." In 1231 the abbot of Ferté had six days of lighter penance for not having punished those who had fed some women with meat

<sup>1</sup> Cf. § 5 of the statutes of 1180: "In our churches let none be buried but kings, queens—*reginas*—and bishops; in our chapter-houses abbots, or the aforesaid if they prefer it"; and, again, in the statutes for 1215: "The abbot of Fontfroide, who hath buried in his church a woman named Regina, because her name might have deceived him, shall be [only] six days under the lighter punishment (two of which shall be on bread and water) and forty days deposed from his abbot's stall; let the brethren abstain from wine on six Fridays."

<sup>2</sup> *Mém. Soc. Ant. de la Morinie*, XI, 305 ff.

<sup>3</sup> The earlier foundations, in this Order, enjoyed considerable disciplinary authority over the daughter-abbeyes which had gone forth from them.

<sup>4</sup> The Mariawald accounts show that the monks employed girls to winnow their oats (p. 78).

in a house against the precinct wall; henceforth no woman was to be permitted in that house. In 1235,

let no monk or lay-brother repair to any nun of any Order, nor to any anchoress, for the sake of talk or hospitality, except by special licence of his abbot; let all who contravene this be severely punished at the visitation.

In 1237 abbesses and nuns are strictly forbidden to attend the Chapter General. In 1238 the abbot of Signy had allowed women to be brought into the precincts; for that and "certain erroneous and most suspicious words concerning the Glorious Virgin... and for many other matters," he was deposed. In 1240, the abbot of Knockmory in Ireland earned deposition by having his head washed by a woman; the Chapter commuted this for 40 days of deposition from his stall in choir, and six days of lighter penance of which two should be on bread and water. In 1244, "if the lord Pope have granted to any women the right of ingress into any abbeys of our Order, let them not on any account be permitted to pass the night there." In 1247, the Chapter refused to receive a double monastery into the Order unless the monks and nuns separated altogether into two monasteries. In 1252, the abbot of Ebrach had allowed women in his abbey for several days "yet had not stripped the altars... or ceased from divine service, as the decrees bid us"; there is no talk of his deposition; only, in a later paragraph, a repetition of an earlier decree. Then, in 1253, the abbot of Preuilly "had received the king's sons with a multitude of followers and women into his monastery... and allowed women to spend the night there." He was very lightly punished; the monks were to recite the seven penitential psalms and accept stripes privately in the church; deposition was spared at the princes' request. At the same request, and because one of the ladies had a papal indulgence to enter men's monasteries, the abbot and convent of Barleaux were let off very easily. In 1258,

All abbots, and all other members of our Order, are most strictly prohibited from presuming, henceforth, in the nuns' hostel or elsewhere in the houses of our Order, whether within or without the townships, to eat with the nuns at the same table; let an offending abbot fast on bread and water for every Friday until the next General Chapter ensuing, whereat he shall publicly beg pardon for his fault; offending monks shall have the last place [in choir] and fast every Friday for a year on bread and water.

At about this time a very significant change comes over the Chapter Acts; single cases are less frequently mentioned; the complaints become more general and bitterer in tone. These formal documents strikingly corroborate the complaints of an English Cistercian who, towards the end of the thirteenth century, composed a poetical lamentation over the decay of his Order<sup>1</sup>. He begins:

Sweet Order of Cîteaux, that didst once shine as the lily, a flower that knew no fading, dear to God and to man, alas! in our parts it stinketh now in men's nostrils and is of bitter savour to God... O famous Order! in thee, as I now see, greed hath conquered charity and lust hath conquered chastity: there is none in our days who can say: "In the Lord is my trust."

The monks break the prohibition of flesh-diet; they have ceased to labour; the Friars have taken their place in the world's esteem; men are no longer brought into the Order by a real religious vocation, but by the hope of living more comfortably here than by their own labour in the world. We may make some allowance here for the bitterness of a disappointed disciplinarian; but the impression here created deepens as we follow the Statutes from year to year. In 1262 the difficulty of papal indulgences again crops up; the old prohibitions are repeated. In 1270 the Chapter decrees: "With regard to the statute long since promulgated (dist. x, chap. 20) beginning *mulieribus omnino*, let it be inviolably observed, better than it is usually kept—*melius solito*—throughout all the houses of our Order"<sup>2</sup>. It is evident

<sup>1</sup> *Zwei Gedichte zur Gesch. d. Cistercienser Ordens*, v. W. Meyer (*Nachrichten d. k. Gesellschaft d. Wissenschaften z. Göttingen*, 1908, pp. 396 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> This is the decree of 1256, to the effect that women must be strictly kept away from all the monastic buildings, except for the few days when an abbey church is dedicated. In case of infraction, the altars are to be stripped, service is to be discontinued; the offending abbot is to fast on bread and water until the next Chapter General; prior or cellarer is to be deposed; the other monks to be punished in proportion. See full text in *Yorks. Archaeol. Journ.* x, 398. As significant, side by side with this repetition of the old but too neglected decree, it is pertinent to quote a decree of 1271 which appears in Wiater's, though not in Martène's collection. "Item, cum super illo vicio indicibili et pessimo clamor multiplex et indecens aures Capituli pluries pulsaverit," the Chapter re-enacts and strengthens the decree of 1266 beginning "ad detestationem et abolitionem indicibilis vitii propter quod in filios diffidentiae legitur ira Dei venisse." Simple imprisonment does not seem to be enough. A similar entry recurs in 1274: cf. 1396, § 9.



from the 8th Statute of this same year that certain Cistercian monasteries kept taverns which were sometimes haunted by women and gamblers. In 1274 a cardinal legate actually granted women leave to enter the monasteries of his province; the Chapter manfully resisted this. The 4th decree of 1277 seems to point to a growing number of cases of theft and incontinence: for such offences, it is now impossible to keep up the old penalty of banishment to another monastery, because "the fair fame of our Order is blackened in many ways—*multipliciter*—by the frequent banishments of its members." Similarly in 1278, the abbot of Cliente has legally earned deposition for admitting women; he is in fact punished only with "three days of lighter penance," though actual deposition is threatened for any repetition of the offence. In 1281, the Chapter finds it necessary to legislate against the "pseudo-Religious, who defile our Order under the cloak of honesty," and steal out by night from abbeys, granges, or cellarers' houses. In 1293 (W) abbots are forbidden to stay at nunneries on their way to or from the General Chapter. Next year, the legislators set themselves to remove "all kinds of dishonesty and all occasions for sinister report," by repeating the old decree against eating with nuns. Next year, nuns are in the same way forbidden to eat with secular folk "on account of the perils which beset cloistered persons if they live among the gentiles, and lest their good manners be corrupted by evil communications." Next year again, the old prohibition and penalties against staying at nunneries, or meeting with nuns, are decreed against abbots and monks; nuns are again forbidden to eat with secular folk. Next year, a fresh decree testifies to the impotence of its predecessors:

Item, to abolish the fleshly filth of uncleanness, lest the purity of our Order be corrupted by the leaven of wickedness, the Chapter General doth strictly command that any monk or lay brother convicted of bringing women into the abbeys, granges or cellarers' houses, wherein women are not accustomed to dwell or to enter, shall be cast into prison until it be the good pleasure of the Chapter to release him, while all former decrees against such offenders remain in full force.

The mere implication that there are now customary places for women to enter marks a wide departure from the original policy. In 1300, it is again decreed that the old and regular statute

against monks entering nunneries must henceforward be inviolably kept. In 1312 (W) this is again repeated, "to moderate the unbridled abuse" of nunneries entertaining monastic travellers. About the same time (Winter, p. 273) the Chapter complains of "the manifold excesses of nuns wandering damnably outside their nunneries." In 1333 (W) the stale prohibition of intercourse between monks and nuns is again repeated, with a preamble which only testifies to its past inefficacy. In 1339 (W):

Since dedicated virgins should be utterly alien from fellowship and cohabitation with men, therefore the Chapter General hath thought fit to decree, still more strictly, that no nun of our Order presume to keep pages, menservants, or even secular chaplains, in their rooms after Compline.

In 1346 (W) all who get out of the monastery at night are to be punished as if convicted of incontinence; with nuns, under similar circumstances, the presumption of guilt is to be taken still more emphatically; moreover, all this is given only as a repetition of a previous decree. In 1348 (W) all nuns who have given birth to a child are to be kept for the rest of their lives within the nunnery precincts, unless pardoned by the General Chapter; thus, this strict claustration which had been the regular rule in early Cistercianism has now become a quite exceptional punishment for the gravest offences. In 1355 (W) "in certain nunneries it is customary for the nuns... on the Feast of the Innocents and other feasts... to play and dance and wear secular garments in an indecorous fashion." In 1360, there are "sometimes grave scandals" through the appointments of secular chaplains to nunneries. In 1367 (W) and several following years, abbeys are allowed to admit women during funeral ceremonies. The records now become far more scanty in all directions, and there are gaps of many years. In 1422, in spite of the clear papal and capitular decrees for the claustration of nuns, yet the abbots and other authorities

have hitherto been negligent to enforce the same, and the said nuns, loosing the reins of decency and casting impudently aside the modesty of their profession and the shamefulness of their sex, are sometimes not afraid to wander abroad from their nunneries to other houses, lay or monastic, and to baths, and impudently to visit birthday-feasts, and frequently to admit suspicious persons into their nunneries, to

the grievous offence of Him to whom they have voluntarily vowed their virginity, to the opprobrium of Religion, and to the scandal of many people.

The nunnery gates, therefore, are to be kept against "all men, of whatever condition, state, or eminence, only princes, bishops and abbots being excepted"; workmen are to be admitted only under strict precautions; in short, the regulations which have always been nominally in force must now really be kept. Yet, in 1437 the decrees show plainly that these had not been kept, and that wandering abroad was still common; monks, again, were still associating with women, but there was the excuse of disorganization due to the wars. In 1444 (and again in 1460) it is complained that certain abbots "frequent wedding-feasts, with too great levity of spirit, after the fashion of secular folk"<sup>1</sup>. In 1448 the Spanish nunneries are bidden to maintain the rule of keeping their gates shut at night; similar measures are taken in 1449 for the whole Order, and "no confessors or chaplains are to be given to the nuns, but such as are of honest life and sufficient education." In 1458,

we decree, under pain of deposition to all abbesses and nuns, that they suffer no persons of the male sex to spend the night in their chambers or houses, and that the houses be kept so locked after Compline that the nuns may not go forth, nor any man come in unto them.

In 1484, the prohibition of women in monastic churches is altogether removed so far as concerns "princesses and women of rank—*potentibus*"; a similar small relaxation is made in 1486. In 1516 the Chapter fulminates, with grievous threats, against the intolerable abuse of certain abbots who, casting aside all reverence for their monastic state, are not ashamed to keep women under colour of their domestic and daily necessities, and sometimes to cause such women to minister food unto their monks, whereby such women frequent the monastic buildings and the abbots' and monks' chambers, to the utmost peril and perdition of souls.

But these thunders are characteristically dulled by the final clause which allows the presence of women "so noble, excellent and highly-placed that we may not deny them entrance without detriment [to ourselves]." In 1518, the assembled fathers seek

<sup>1</sup> For the general indecorum of medieval wedding-feasts, see my *Social Life in Britain*, p. 439, and *Chaucer and his England*, p. 281.

"to withdraw the protonotaries and our other enemies from their malignity" by exhorting

our abbots and monks to live according to the Rule, to keep inviolate the three essential vows [of poverty, chastity, and obedience], to cut off the sin of private property, to avoid wanderings abroad, to keep the monastery gates shut, to allow women on no account within the precincts, etc. etc.

In 1525 the nuns are still wandering abroad, in spite of papal and capitular prohibitions. It is about this time that we must date the letter from Oliver Adams, last abbot but two of the Cistercian house of Combe (Warwick), which has survived among the archives of the Order at Dijon<sup>1</sup>. Writing under pressure of "zeal for the house of God and for our Religion," the abbot besought the General Chapter to decree,

under the strictest censures and penalties, that within the space of one year the entrance and frequentation of women be excluded from the monasteries of our Order; for, without this, the honesty of Religion and the monastic observance will never be in good repute; for this thing is and hath been the ruin of many monks; for, as we hope<sup>2</sup>, this abuse hath struck deeper roots among us than among any other nation.

The authorities endorsed this appeal with the note "let the clause here expressed be put most expressly and strictly into the commission for the English houses."

Oliver Adams might piously hope that the continental monasteries were better than ours; but the evidence points strongly in the other direction. The distinguished Johann Busch, who did so much in his day to reform a group of German monasteries, began in 1420 with a house of his own Augustinian Order in Friesland<sup>3</sup>. There he found

few priests, and many lay brethren, more than 30 or 40. These had made a pact with the lay brethren of a Cistercian monastery a mile distant, that they would help each other against all their adversaries with 100 armed men; and thus they had subdued unto themselves all that part of Friesland... None of them was continent, and all had

<sup>1</sup> I have printed the original Latin in E.H.R. XXIX (1914), 39 n.

<sup>2</sup> Or, "as we think"; *ut speramus* often bears this sense in medieval Latin.

<sup>3</sup> *De Ref. Monast.* lib. I, c. 4. This episode, with a little more of Busch's book, was translated in the *British Magazine* for April, 1841 (xix, 369 ff.). But it was then broken off, evidently proving too strong meat for the early Tractarians. I shall recur to Busch in vol. III.

private property, keeping nuns with them in the monastery, with whom they slept and sometimes begat children.

The country-folk complained of this scandal to the bishop of Utrecht, who sent a commission of enquiry. These

found that almost all these lay brethren had come in without Rule or profession, and had long lived in the monastery without any promise of obedience. Being asked how they had come to take this lay brethren's habit, they said: "When we first came hither, we found many here clad in the white frock and scapular [of the Cistercians], and yet armed for war; wherefore we also bought white cloth, whence we caused white frocks and hoods and scapulars to be made for us, and put them on of our own accord." The commissioners asked whether they had ever heard anything of their Rule. They answered: "Never," and added: "Each took unto himself a nun or a lay sister or some other woman, with whom he lived unmarried, and sometimes begat children."

This would never, I think, have been possible even in the remotest parts of Ireland, Wales and Scotland; and we have much evidence to prove that the German houses in general were still more decayed than the British. The reader would scarcely gather as much from Janssen's *History of the German People*. Janssen, to do him justice, writes far more plainly than any orthodox English Roman Catholic has dared to write in our generation; but he practically ignores the evidence of one writer who destroys the whole apologetic fabric—abbot Johann v. Trithem. He ignores also a great deal of the official documentary evidence, choosing as a rule only the pieces which best serve his particular purpose, and thus finding an excuse for summing up agnostically: "No conclusive generalization as to the success of the monastic reforms of the fifteenth century is yet possible, in the existing state of research"<sup>1</sup>. Yet Trithem himself, who was one of the most distinguished among these orthodox reformers, generalizes for us most clearly and conclusively. In a speech pronounced before his assembled fellow-abbots, in 1492, he asks: "Where are all the great monastic reforms of the past, from Charles the Great onwards?" And he answers: "All have fallen away from their original institution, and have fallen into ruin either utterly or at least in greater part." Our own latest-reformed congregation of

<sup>1</sup> *Gesch. d. deutschen Volkes*, I (17th ed. 1897), 722.

Bursfeld (he continues) after less than 80 years of existence, shows terrible signs of decay.

Lo! how many monasteries, convents, and religious houses we see nowadays miserably deformed in both estates [*i.e.* in matters temporal and spiritual], yet we know that it is only a few years since they were well reformed<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, he frequently repeats the same complaint elsewhere; it would be possible to fill a whole volume with his evidence of monastic decay in all the Orders, including his own reformed congregation; and Janssen's suppression of this evidence is the more noteworthy, because he is constantly quoting Trithem for comparatively trifling matters. Far more thorough and outspoken is Winter, in his *Cistercienser des Nordöst. Deutschlands*, a work compiled from the Chapter Acts and the chronicles and official documents of the different abbeys. Winter points out how, already in the middle of the thirteenth century, the authorities are contending with the painful fact that few converts can be found after the age of discretion; the age of entrance for novices, therefore, is lowered to fifteen years (II, 157). Again, while the first half of the fourteenth century shows a steady process of decay and a steady struggle of the authorities against this downward movement, "in the second half, even this struggle is given up" (III, 1). "The main cause must be sought in the fact that the abbeys themselves have lost that power of self-denial which had made the Order so great" (III, 24).

The nunneries are by this time in a very bad state. . . Mendicants frequent the cloister precincts; nuns give birth to children. Their punishment is to lose their rank in the convent and to do open penance; but influential relations strive not infrequently to procure the restoration of these fallen nuns to their former rank. Games and dances in worldly dress are popular at many festivities in the nunneries. . . the conventual observance is so decayed, that even the Masses for the founders' souls are now neglected. The General Chapter complains: "That place where the clergy should have found a model of holy life and a mirror of willing obedience, and from whence

<sup>1</sup> *Declamatio ad Abbates*, cap. v (*Opera*, ed. Mainz, 1604, p. 875). Cf. cap. III (p. 861) and *De Viris Illustribus*, lib. I (*ibid.* pp. 24-5); also the whole book, *De Statu et Ruina Monastici Ordinis*, and the whole of his *Dehortationes ad Monachos*. Janssen, so far as I can discover, alludes only once to Trithem's monastic evidence, in a vague footnote which is almost more misleading than his general silence (p. 730, note 4).

the zeal of holy faith should have spread among the people, has now become a laughing stock, a stumblingblock and an object of scorn" (III, 32-3).

For France, the original documents seem to be far more plentiful, and certainly they have been worked out by an even abler historian than Winter, and a more candid than Janssen. Imbart de la Tour, orthodox as he is, has little to say in favour of the French houses during the century preceding the Reformation. He points out how hard the wars had hit them; but he adds that a still more fatal cause of decay is to be found in the commendam system, which had crept in everywhere and undermined both financial and moral health. "Cîteaux struggled in vain; the popes continually granted dispensations from the constitutions [of the General Chapter forbidding this abuse]"<sup>1</sup>. "The abbots (so declares a Chapter of Cîteaux in 1473) who ought to have proposed [for the monastic offices] such men as surpassed their fellows in wisdom and moral worth, have on the contrary chosen such as had only nobility of race." "One of the commissioners of 1493 states similarly that the monasteries are filled with younger sons of good families, placed there by their parents 'as an escape from beggary,' who corrupt the regular life." Passing to speak of French monachism in general, Imbart writes:

Read the innumerable testimonies of this time—historical anecdotes, rebukes of moralists, satires of scholars and poets, papal bulls, reforming ordinances or decrees, capitular or synodal constitutions—what do they say? Always the same facts and the same complaints: the suppression of conventual life, of discipline, of morals... Prodigious is the number of monastic robbers and debauchees: to realize their disorders, we must read the details revealed by judicial enquiry as to the internal state of the majority of great abbeys... The austere houses in their turn, those which are specially vowed to contemplation and preaching, are attacked by this running sore. At Cîteaux, discipline is weakened by worldly business, the multiplication of administrative offices, the intrusion of great and noble folk. Among the Carthusians... a document of the second half of the fifteenth century tells us "the abuses are so great that the Order is in ill repute almost everywhere."

In the nunneries of the different orders "all contributes to transform these asylums of prayer into centres of dissipation and dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Origines de la Réforme*, II (1909), 292, 295, 297, 300, 302, 304, 305.

order. Most of these nuns have taken the veil by family convention or the need of a livelihood. The man who gives a dowry to his eldest daughter must make some sort of provision for the younger girls." "It may be said that monastic life has disappeared from the nunneries."

Never was there an age at which the monastic system sank so low as at the end of the fifteenth century, or when more urgent and more complete reforms were needed. "Men of Religion" (so say the king and the commission of enquiry in 1493) "lead a dissolute and abominable life... The abuses, scandals and faults of our present time... are growing from day to day in the Church." "The lack of rule in most monasteries of this kingdom" (wrote Leo X in 1516) "and the immodest—*impudique*—life of the monks have come to such a pitch that neither kings, princes, nor the faithful at large have any respect left for them."... Doubtless there were still, even in this disorder, some whose fertile activity continued to renew the soil, to extend culture and to create wealth, with others who still sought learning in the universities or preached God's word to the multitude. But their numbers were restricted, and their influence limited; thus, their help did not redeem this enormous deficit.

Coming at last to the efforts made to restore discipline in the two last generations before Luther's appearance, Imbart writes (p. 525):

So we cannot deny the effect of the measures for reform. Yet, real as were the results obtained, how small they were!—*combien sont-ils peu de chose!*—Contemporaries show us bitterly the persistence of the evil and the extent of its ravages. Writers like Bouchet, churchmen like Clichtoveus, the pope himself in 1516, complain of the inefficacy of the measures that have been taken; a few outward wounds have been dressed, but the evil has not been cured.

The later history of the French Cistercians may be summed up in very few words. The researches of Dom Paul Denis have shown that the Order was still more disorganized in the seventeenth century than in the sixteenth. When, in 1634, Cardinal Richelieu set up a commission for the reform of all the great Orders, "at the very first sitting, some members thought seriously of suppressing the Cistercians, whom they regarded as incorrigible and hardened in evil-doing." They contented themselves finally with putting the government into the hands of the few reformed houses, and forbidding the unreformed



majority to receive any fresh brethren. The unreformed abbots appealed first to the king, then to Richelieu; but both persisted in their plans of reform. Nothing, however, could be done without the Pope, who persistently withheld his consent, so that Richelieu died, after nine years, without achieving his object. After Richelieu's death and the king's, the unreformed Cistercians obtained a papal judgement in their favour, and "the reform which Richelieu had undertaken was killed by this blow." The reformed minority struggled on under persecution, until, a century and a half later, the Revolution swept the French Cistercians away with the rest<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Richelieu et la Réforme des Monastères Bénédictins* (Paris, 1913), pp. 183 ff.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE ENGLISH CISTERCIANS

**B**EFORE passing away altogether from the Cistercian reform, it will be well to bring together a few facts illustrating the history of the English Cistercians.

The story of Fountains is practically the story of Cîteaux over again. It may be found in Dugdale-Caley, v, 292 ff., from the pen of an old monk who had been about 30 years old when the foundation took place. The first Cistercian house in Yorkshire was Rievaulx (1131). This was founded by a colony direct from Clairvaux, "men of holiness and religion, glorying in their poverty, and keeping holy peace with all but their own flesh and the Ancient Enemy." Fired by this example of sanctity, thirteen brethren of the rich abbey of St Mary's at York, including the prior, "separated themselves from the rest as the fat is cut away from the lean," and went out on a venture of faith. They were twelve priests and a deacon, "bearing nothing forth from the goods of the abbey save their frocks only." The archbishop encouraged them; but the abbot and the majority of the convent were bitterly hostile to a movement which implied their own condemnation. Archbishop Thurstan reported the reformers' reasons in a letter to the archbishop of Canterbury. The prior, he says, complains that he has found it impossible to live according to the Rule at St Mary's;

for while some, after [evening] collation, go to church [for the last service of the day], others, on the other hand, withdraw themselves for jesting and useless babble and confabulation, as though the evil of the day were not sufficient, unless night should have her super-added evil also. Moreover he hath added many things concerning their irregularities in food, their sweet and solemn potations, turn by turn, the price and delicacy of their garments. . . . "We are all covetous" [saith this prior], "and angry, and quarrelsome; we take that which is another's, we demand our own in the law courts, we defend fraud and lies, we follow after the flesh and the lusts thereof. We live for ourselves and our own pleasures, we fear to be overcome and glory in overcoming; we avoid oppression yet oppress our neighbours; we

envy others, boast and rejoice in our own prosperity, fattening on other men's sweat, while the whole world is not enough for our malice. If, amongst ourselves, the gospel life seemeth dead and impossible, let us look to these monks of Clairvaux and Savigny"<sup>1</sup>.

The abbot, a weak but well-meaning man, asked the prior to draw up a written statement of his position. The latter obeyed, and pleaded with conspicuous moderation for a return to the actual Rule. Let us keep (he said) St Benedict's positive prescriptions as to food and silence; let the rich endowments we enjoy from parochial revenues be spent in hospitality and alms; our lands and our flocks will suffice amply for us monks, if we do the work ourselves.

But when the other monks heard the rumour of these things, this multitude burst out into such a sudden fury of envy, that they would have done no less than banish such a fellow as this, with his friends [to some distant cell], or cast him into strict ward.

The abbot pleaded

that it would be difficult for him to change what his predecessors seemed to have held; and he must take prudent advice on this matter . . . Meanwhile the rest of the brethren, fearing to be kept more strictly to the Rule than was their wont, began to rage against the prior and his fellows almost as the Pharisees raged against the apostles; and, but for the kindly intercession of some, their fury would have exceeded all bounds of domestic persecution<sup>2</sup>.

The archbishop here intervened, and would have persuaded the abbot to let the thirteen go; a day was fixed for discussion in Chapter between the metropolitan and the monks. The latter (to quote the archbishop's own words)

were, meanwhile, the more cruelly stirred to envy against the thirteen, in proportion as these their brethren sought the more openly to fulfil the terms of their monastic vow. They called in those monks of the congregations of Marmoutier and Cluny who dwell in our neighbourhood, that these, by their presence and their acclamations, might condemn the others as deserters and violators of the common Order, and therefore as unworthy of all office or dignity in the abbey.

<sup>1</sup> The independent reformed congregation of Savigny, in Normandy, coalesced with that of Cîteaux in 1147.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the persecutions suffered about the same time by St Bernard of Tiron from his unreformed brethren, P.L. vol. 172, cols. 1377, 1400.

The archbishop came to the chapter-house, with seven distinguished clerics as his assessors;

when, behold! the whole chamber rang with such din and confusion, that it was more like unto the seditious raging of drunken and riotous men than unto monastic humility—whereof, indeed, there was at this time no sign. . . . And, seizing upon the prior and his fellows, they began to drag them along, wishing, as they had concerted among themselves, either to cast them into prison or to drive them into banishment. The victims, having no other hope of escape, cast their arms fast about me, beseeching my protection and that of St Peter [patron of York cathedral]; and thus we came with difficulty into the church, while the rest followed us even into the sacred edifice, raging and crying aloud, "Seize the rebels, lay hands upon the traitors!"

The archbishop, fearing personal violence, brought the thirteen out with him to his own palace, from whence he wrote to enlist the sympathy of his brother of Canterbury:

The abbot of St Mary's and his monks ought herein at least to imitate the Egyptians and Babylonians, who permitted the children of Israel to depart unto the Land of Promise. . . . nor should we judge these men as deserters, but rather as useful ministers, who leave a place where the liberty of sin is too large, and who desire to serve God in greater safety; nay, Christ Himself should warn the others from their present mind, for He rebuked the Pharisees in that they neither entered in themselves nor suffered others to enter in. It is notorious to all men, that the Rule of St Benet hath utterly lost, universally and throughout the whole world, its proper fashion and state, so that we are lost in wonder that any man can be called by that name before God and His Saints, when he doth so deliberately and so daily neglect that Rule—or, to speak more truly, when he is so constrained to break the observance thereof. . . . It is true that the very multitude of those who live thus giveth them the boldness of constant custom. Yet, I grieve to say, this boldness of the monks is false; it is plainly false; since the multitude of sinners createth no impunity for their offence.

Under cover of this high protection and these earnest pleadings, the thirteen went out into the wild forest-land at the head of Skeldale; where the archbishop had given them "a farmstead with the fields thereunto appertaining"; they called the place Fountains, from its abundance of springs. Richard, the prior, was elected abbot in regular form, under the archbishop's presidency. Thus they began amid the rocks and trees.

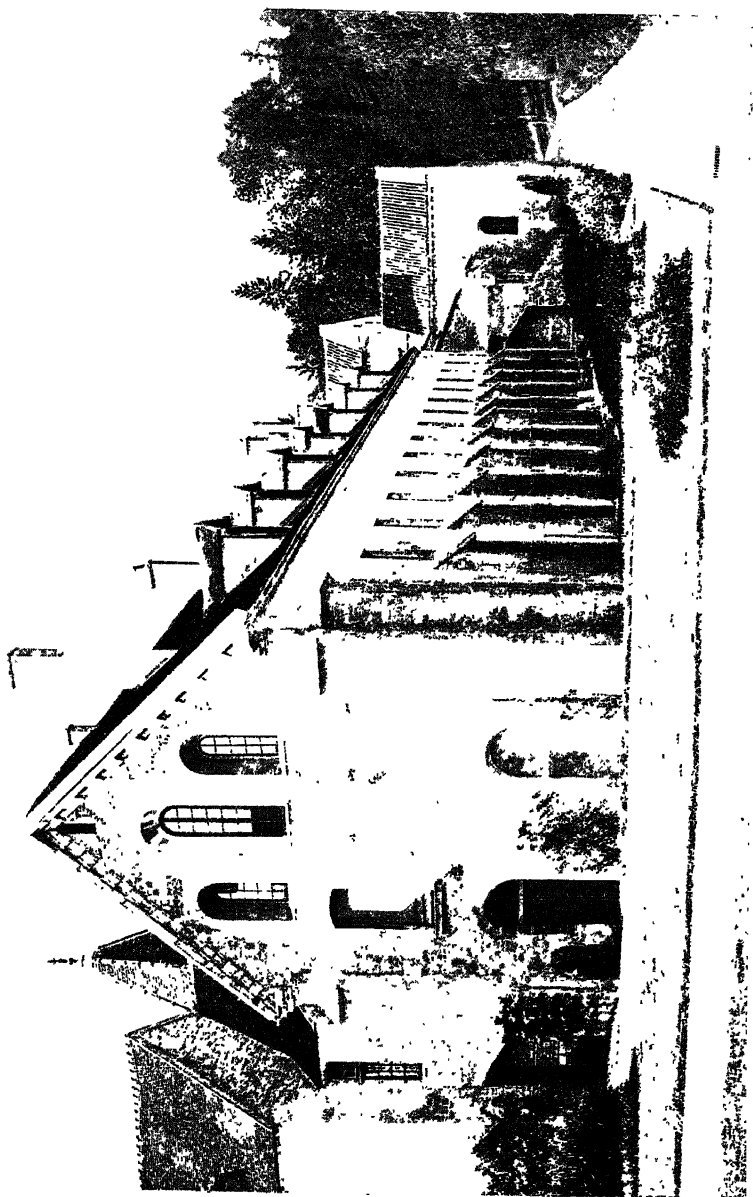
There was an elm in the midst of the valley, wide-branched and leafy as such trees are wont to be, which tempered the cold of winter

to the beasts that lay beneath it, and sheltered them with its leaves from the summer heat. Thither the holy men repaired, seeking the hospitality of its shade. . . All slept together under this tree, a poor convent, yet mighty in the Lord, twelve priests and one deacon. The holy archbishop provided them with bread, and, for a while, the flowing stream with drink. At night, they arose for their regular vigils, sang the psalms of the Rule, laboured earnestly in prayer, and provoked each other to rivalry in God's praise. By day they girded their loins to labour, some cutting boughs from the woods hard by to build their church; others, more far-seeing, tilling little gardens. In that place no man ate the bread of idleness, nor did any take rest until he was wearied with work. Hungry they went to table, and weary to rest, never sated with food, yet never murmuring. No sign of sadness was to be seen, no voice of complaint, but they blessed God in all cheerfulness, poor in worldly goods but strong in faith.

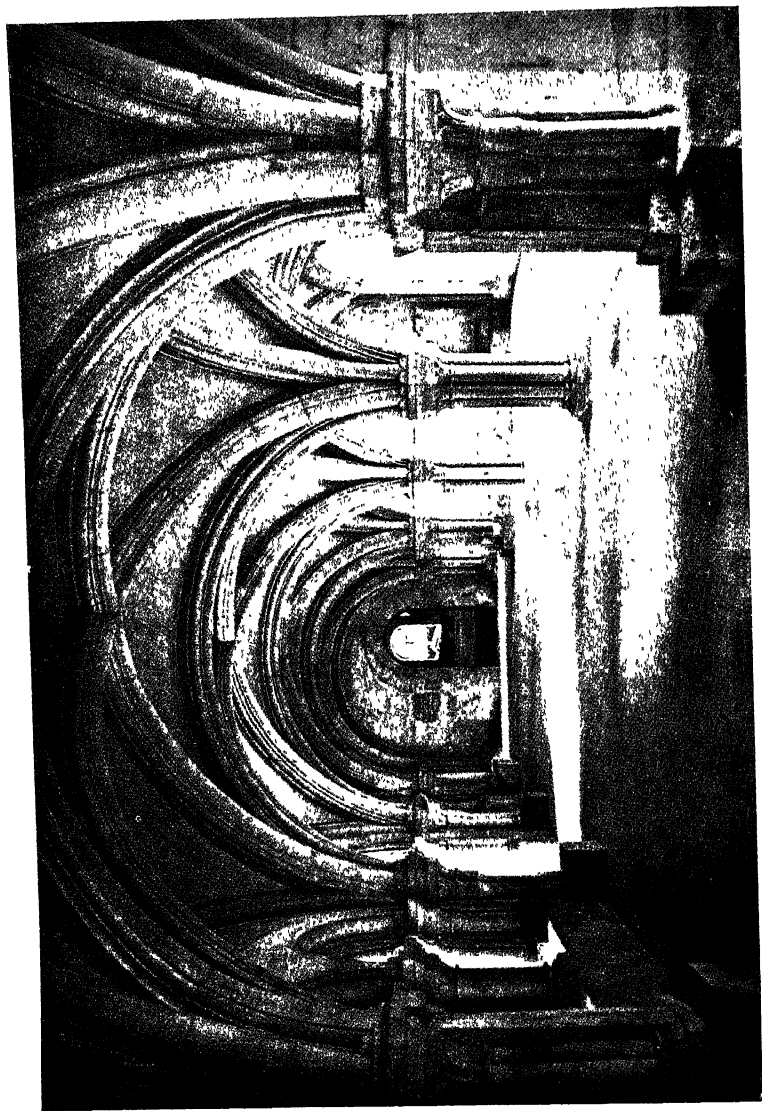
Two, however, turned back, Gervase and Ralph. After a while Gervase came again and redeemed his apostasy; but Ralph "be-took himself to a laxer life. . . he made a compact with his flesh, and his belly clave unto the dust." The monks wrote to St Bernard, who took them under his protection and sent a brother from Clairvaux, Geoffrey, to teach them. Geoffrey, though advanced in age, undertook this missionary work as a matter of duty and obedience; but it distressed him to think of being buried away from Clairvaux.

Then said the saint, "Go in all confidence; fear not; I will bury thee here in this place." Which indeed came to pass; for, having done his work at Fountains, he came back to Clairvaux; there he fell sick; his disease lay hard upon him; and, fortified with all due ceremonies, he was laid to rest among his fathers by the hands of the holy abbot [Bernard].

Meanwhile ten clerics and lay folk joined the little Fountains group; but the hardships were too great. They had no farther endowments; a year of famine came; "the abbot went from place to place around, seeking food for his brethren, and there was none who would give unto them." They were reduced, as the first colony of Clairvaux had been, to cook themselves messes of forest-leaves and wild herbs seasoned with a little salt. "It was as the pottage that was sodden for the sons of the prophets; . . . there was death in the pot, but the meal that was cast therein tempered the bitterness of the mess." After struggling thus for two years, their abbot went to St Bernard and begged for a more



MONKS' DORMITORY AT FONTENAY



VESTIBULE TO CHAPTER-HOUSE, FONTENAY

settled abode. Bernard had already arranged to receive them into one of his granges in Burgundy, when news came that the dean of York had joined them, bringing his books, money, and other possessions. "The first part was devoted to the poor; the next part to the building, and the rest was laid by for the use of the holy brethren of the monastery." Then a rich canon of York left them his money; then another joined them with all his wealth; then lay donors began to endow the monks with lands. Within three years of their first privations the monks were now securely endowed (1135). Thenceforward they increased steadily in numbers and in wealth; but within twenty years we have indications of greater spiritual difficulties, of internal friction, of struggles to maintain discipline in the abbey and its dependent houses. In John's reign we see how rich Fountains had become. The abbot, after vainly attempting to placate the king with minor gifts, was obliged to suffer an extortion of 1200 marks, equivalent to at least £12,000 in pre-war currency. In 1294 we find the abbey in great financial straits "partly, it appears, from misconduct and extravagance" (*l.c.* 286). In 1363, nine of their granges were found to be ruinous past repair. Sparse as these later notices are, they show that Fountains was sharing the general decay of the Order.

If the early monks at Fountains had lived humbly, so also had those of the earliest English Cistercian house, Waverley in Surrey<sup>2</sup>. It was founded in 1128 for twelve monks and an abbot, the usual Benedictine quorum. In 1187, we find 70 monks and 120 lay brethren in the abbey. About the year 1200, a benefactor left, as endowment for one extra monk, one mark a year; from this it would seem to follow that the equivalent of £13 in pre-war currency would barely feed and clothe a monk. In [1250], we find Abbot Walter Giffard "appointing a private mass to be said on the anniversary of all good Christians who should bequeath an annual sum for the refreshment of the brethren." Between then and 1279, three endowments were given to provide

<sup>1</sup> It has often been remarked that we have more Cistercian ruins than others, because they were built in wilder places. Abbeys like Reading and Winchcombe have almost altogether disappeared; almost within the memory of living men, the stones of Glastonbury were being sold at 5*d.* a cart load. But Fountains, Tintern, Rievaulx, etc. were too far from the populous centres to tempt the spoiler in this way.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale-Caley, v, 237 ff.



the monks with "pittances," *i.e.* choicer dishes on special occasions; each of these pittances averages more than a mark, so that it costs more now to provide the extras for a single meal than, two generations ago, to feed and clothe a monk for a year. At Rievaulx, about the same time, one single meal-pittance amounted to £5, or £100 modern. The monks' feast, on that day, must have resembled that which Giraldus Cambrensis describes at Christchurch Priory, Canterbury<sup>1</sup>.

Scattered and tantalizing as the notices of these English houses are, enough survives to enable a laborious scholar to piece together a fairly detailed picture of the vicissitudes of an average house. Wherever the evidence has survived, we can trace from the thirteenth century a general decrease in numbers, in prosperity, and in efficiency. At Tintern, for instance, there seem to have been only thirteen monks at the Dissolution. But in one case we are not left to such scattered indications: here we have a really intimate chronicle, throwing a great deal of light not only on the writer's own time but, incidentally, on earlier generations. This is the *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, begun between 1396 and 1407 by William of Burton, who, as abbot, "had done his best to reform the discipline of the convent, but had small success in his efforts to enforce order." So writes Dr E. A. Bond, in whose Introductions the story of this Yorkshire abbey of Meaux may be read in great detail; it must suffice here to summarize it very briefly. The whole work forms three volumes in the Rolls Series: it contains Burton's chronicle with a continuation down to about 1440 by another monk of the same house: both authors wrote only for the eyes of their fellow-monks.

Meaux lies in Holderness, not far from Beverley. It had evidently passed through the phases which we have already noticed in other houses; and Burton, like many other monastic chroniclers, complains bitterly of his predecessors' neglect. He writes in his preface:

Whereas I find that the memory of the illustrious abbots of our convent of Meaux hath almost utterly perished through the sloth of negligent persons . . . after long search, I have gathered together certain ancient scrolls and neglected parchments, some of which I found exposed to the rain, and others set aside to be burned.

<sup>1</sup> *Opera*, R.S. I, 51; I deal fully with monastic diet in vol. II.

Meaux had been founded in the first half of the twelfth century, probably for the usual twelve monks and an abbot. We can roughly trace its growth and decay in numbers. In 1142, there were 40 monks; in 1240, 50; in 1249, 60, with 90 lay brethren (III, xxxvi). In 1348 (before the Black Death, be it noted), these had sunk to 42 monks with 7 lay brethren; in 1394 there were no lay brethren, and only 28 monks; two years later, there were only 27<sup>1</sup>. We get very similar glimpses of their financial vicissitudes. In 1170, they seem still to be poor, as Waverley was. But Abbot Robert, about 1280, found rich possessions to waste. He alienated lands, and sold wool at a disadvantage to usurious merchants of Lucca, who gave him inadequate sums of ready money to forestall the crops of future years.

And though, in a single year of his abbacy, the convent stock amounted to 11,000 sheep and almost 1000 great cattle, yet on his resignation he left us in debt to the extent of more than £3678. 3s. 11d. sterling; whereof £2500 were owing to foreign merchants and usurers. By 1286, his successor had reduced that debt by £2097; but the stock amounted only to 1320 sheep and 477 great cattle; and there was a deficiency of stores to the amount of about £200. These would, of course, be equivalent to very large sums in modern money.

Under his successor Roger (about 1290) the convent raised ready money again by the old unthrifty methods. The abbot farmed out the manor of Wick and the grange of Mytton to the dean of York and his brother, for 800 marks down. A few months later, the dean and his brother restored the lands for a consideration of £100 a year during the next 19 years; by this transaction the monks found that their £660 down was costing them £1900 to be paid in yearly instalments. The lenders, however, promised to quit all further claim whenever the 800

<sup>1</sup> Compare the story of another Cistercian abbey, Froidmont, from which detailed records survive. About 1200, there were 150 monks and 100 lay brethren; an inventory of 1224 "shows that 227 hired servants supplied the deficiencies of the lay brethren. From the second half of the thirteenth century onwards, this proportion was greater still, by reason of the falling-off of numbers of lay brethren, and even the method of tillage had to be changed. The monks, now insufficient in numbers, were withdrawn from the several granges, and replaced by secular farmers. Decay was setting in." Yet in 1224 the abbey possessed 5000 sheep, 255 cows, about 450 swine, and more than 250 horses and mules. In 1230, they sold 7000 fleeces to the merchants (*Mem. Soc. Oise*, tom. 7 (1870), pp. 496-7).

marks should be repaid. So the abbot went to the General Chapter, borrowed the sum at 5 per cent., and offered to pay the lenders. These, however, now refused to be bought off; it was only after five years' haggling that they accepted repayment, on condition of a pension of £15 (or  $2\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. interest on the repaid sum) for the term of the dean's life<sup>1</sup>. Part of this payment the monks met by handing over to him a grange worth £10 a year. The dean enjoyed his ill-gotten interest for eleven years; at his death the grange came back to Meaux, but bare of stock and with its buildings burned down. Moreover, the abbey was still saddled with the interest payable to the General Chapter—40 marks a year. After twenty years, Meaux ceased to pay this—by a voluntary renunciation on the Chapter's part, our chronicler implies—but the whole transaction goes far to explain why the General Chapter, as apart from the separate abbeys, was by this time so deeply in debt.

In 1339 Meaux owed £368 to different creditors—about £5000 modern. In August, 1349, the abbot died of the Black Death, leaving a debt increased to £500, and great deficiencies of stores, etc. The Black Death, from which the towns seem to have recovered rapidly, hit all stationary or decaying communities very hard. In 1353, Meaux had a debt of £1003, with further deficiencies estimated at over £700. In 1356, the actual debt was only £516; but the live-stock had decreased terribly. We get glimpses of the debt again in 1369 (£230) and 1372 (£80). In 1396, it is £360, rather more than half a year's income of the abbey (£613). In 1399, the year of William Burton's retirement, the debt had mounted to £417, but the income to £628.

Meanwhile, the chronicle gives us many interesting glimpses of the monks' housekeeping. They began on something like the humble scale of Waverley; Dr Bond has well summarized the picturesque and edifying story of their origins (I, xiii ff.). But, if a Meaux monk could ever have been fed and clothed for a mark a year, it certainly was no longer so about 1240, when a benefactor left a water-mill in order to maintain one more brother

<sup>1</sup> For these fraudulent bargains which were encouraged by the Church's original prohibition of all interest, and her gradual abandonment of that stricter doctrine, see W. J. Ashley, *Economic History*, 3rd ed. vol. I, pt i, pp. 195 ff. and pt ii, pp. 395 ff., and my *Social Life in Britain*, pp. 342 ff.

in the abbey. The mill was so valuable that the very site of it let for £5 a year; and we find another mill, about the same time, supplying sufficient income to keep two chaplains, with two clerks to serve them. Even in 1399, after the Black Death, Meaux possessed nearly 20,000 acres of arable and pasture, not counting woods and common-land. The abbot's own plate, apart from that of the church, was valued at nearly £2000 modern. The 28 monks had 40 menials in the narrower sense, apart from such communal servants as the smith, carpenter, tailor, etc. A calculation of the cost of living shows that each monk's food and dress cost from £150 to £180 modern per annum; more than ten times as much as the extreme poverty of Waverley allowed in its early days.

The question of pittances had been one of acute controversy between the Cluniacs and the early Cistercians, whose puritanism rejected such indulgences except on rare and irregular occasions. By and by, however, pittances became regular in Cistercian houses; in 1217 the General Chapter strove vainly against this, enacting that any monk or lay brother who demands a pittance as of right, shall be flogged and fast a day on bread and water. Yet at Clairvaux itself a statutory pittance had been founded by Gautier de Brienne almost in the year of St Bernard's death; in 1175 Louis VII had founded six there; by 1237, there were statutory pittances for the Clairvaux monks on 17 days of the year<sup>1</sup>. Before 1250, ten of half a mark each had been founded at Meaux; enough money to feed and clothe 15 of the original Waverley monks for a year. By 1399, those 27 monks of Meaux enjoyed 23 such pittance-days. They had two cooks and a baker, with five servants under them. Making all allowance for hospitality, we are very far here from the days when the brother of the French king washed the dishes in the kitchen of Clairvaux. Flesh food was commonly eaten now; the old Cistercian pride in their strict observance of the Benedictine Rule was quite gone. When, about 1220, Honorius III gave many privileges to the Order, one had been

that [papal legates], when they came to any house of our Order, should not require flesh-meats, but content themselves with the diet prescribed by our Rule. But (pursues Burton, I, 433,) these privileges

<sup>1</sup> D'Arbois, *l.c.* p. 128.

have become mere empty forms...and their abstinence from flesh is nullified by the custom, which has grown up in our Order, of eating flesh freely, at least on those days whereon flesh may be enjoyed by [all the faithful under church] law, except in Advent and [Lenten-tide].

Such, then, was the monks' fare, apart from their hospitalities and charities, which will be dealt with in vol. II. They lived up to and beyond their great revenues; how had those revenues come to them? Dr Bond points out very truly that the period of real free donations lasted only about a century from the foundation of the abbey (III, xxxviii). After that, "in the majority of recorded instances, [the monks] are not people of mean degree or broken by poverty<sup>1</sup>, but of high position, and purchasing their admission by considerable donations of land and other property." Burton tells a curious story from about 1160 A.D. (I, 161, 163): Ernald of Mountbegon, a neighbouring landowner, took half a ploughland in Doddington which (Burton claims) belonged really to the abbey of Meaux,

and gave it to a certain woman of Doddington who had borne him a son...After his death, this woman Inet, who had borne him this son, demanded the said half-ploughland which (as she asserted) the said Ernald had bestowed upon her and her child. Now the abbot and convent of Thornton stood by this woman aforesaid in her plea, for the special reason that she promised them the half of all that she might win, if they would take her son and bring him up. But we, making peace with the said woman and accepting him to be nourished with us, on condition that they should both forswear all claim to the half-ploughland aforesaid;—we, I say, covenanted to pay the aforesaid eighteen pence yearly to the abbot and convent of Thornton.

The chronicle shows how keenly these monks exploited their possessions in trade; we find them even buying up debts on speculation. Much of their income, as in all other monasteries,

<sup>1</sup> If Dr Bond means here to imply that any considerable proportion of the monks were ever poor or of lowly condition, except at the most exceptional times and places, he is perpetuating an ancient error. It is sometimes noted as a special claim to sanctity in a medieval abbot, by his contemporary biographers, that he was so charitable as to admit even poor men to his community, e.g. St William of Dijon and St Bernard of Tiron. See, for this subject, Savine, pp. 255-6 and Power, *Med. Eng. Nunneries*, pp. 4-9. Their conclusions are borne out by two microscopic studies of the monastic population in particular houses: G. Wagner, *Die Abtei Murbach* (Strassburg, 1911), and G. Burck, *Stand und Herkommen der Insassen einiger Klöster der Mittelalterlichen Mark Meissen* (Meissen, 1913).

came from the appropriation of parish churches, where they kept vicars at low wages and took the rest of the endowments to themselves. About 1320, we find them fighting against the restoration of a chapel at Wandesforth, and the endowment of a chantry there, because it might diminish their income from the mother-church of Naffreton. We find them, after the manner of other monks, steadily refusing on the same grounds to relieve their parishioners from very onerous conditions in the matters of burial and baptism. The chronicle goes far to corroborate Thomas Gascoigne's complaint of half a century later, that the monks often crippled the religious and charitable activities of the parishes. The Meaux Cistercians soon became feudal lords; in spite of all prohibitions, they possessed mills before 1182 and serfs before 1240. In 1360, the serfs of their manor of Wawne showed a strong desire to change masters, and claimed to hold from the king; hence a long-drawn lawsuit, which added heavily to the abbey debt. Dr Bond points out how even the chronicler shows himself and his brethren as not too merciful landlords; he writes (III, xxi):

It may be inferred from these admissions that the general sympathy was with the men who were struggling to free themselves from serfdom—a condition revolting to an advancing sense of justice and liberty—and that bribery was freely used by the abbot in supporting his claims against them.

More serious still, individual monks were open and ready to pocket bribes for their own private profit; the Benedictine law against private possessions was sadly broken. One monk was bribed with a new gown to betray the conventual interests; another hired one of the abbey rectories as a speculation, paying 20 marks for what he could make out of it. Discipline was relaxed in every direction. In defiance of papal and conciliar prohibitions, one of the monks lived by himself in a dependent cell (III, 16, 1380 A.D.). Others lived in granges. The cell of Ottringham was founded in 1293, as a chantry for the soul of Richard de Ottringham (II, 192 ff.). Six monks from the abbey were sent thither to live by themselves, an arrangement which, however profitable to the common finances, would certainly not have been permitted in the earlier days. The abbot furnished these commercial colonists with a code of formal instructions

designed to guard against the temptations of their position, from which two clauses may be quoted here.

Lest in future evils or irregularities should spring from the loose and curious wanderings of the monks (which God forbid!), we strictly decree, under pain of God's judgement, that they scatter not by twos and twos, and thus, wandering from place to place, converse from henceforth<sup>1</sup> with dishonest persons or such as are suspected of foolish talk or scurrility... But let those who need some solace beg leave of the guardian, and go soberly to some place by him indicated, conversing honestly concerning matters of solace, and by no means entering into any dishonest place, whether going or returning... We forbid, with all possible strictness, that no monk enter into a tavern, or be present at any public show—*spectaculum*.

After 24 years, it was found necessary to remove this chantry, with considerable cost and difficulty, to a spot just outside the abbey gate (II, 294), since

our monks who dwelt there beyond the precincts, scarcely<sup>2</sup> observing the Rule or Statutes of the Order to which they were bound, waxed in indiscipline and daily increased the occasions of scandal... The place, unapt to the dwellings of Religious, offered pernicious examples and facilities of sin, to the scandal of Religion.

For money's sake again, women were at last admitted to the abbey church. The chronicler knew the heroic past of this Order; he records a picturesque incident in connection with St Edmund Rich of Canterbury, who was buried at the Cistercian house of Pontigny in 1240 (I, 441). The monks, "gaping perchance after filthy lucre," but "still desirous of keeping the ancient ordinances of our Order," detached an arm from the sacred corpse and brought it to the monastery gate in order to attract offerings from both sexes; but the saint, disgusted at this commercial spirit, declined to work further miracles. There is a similar story of self-denial in early Carthusian history (P. Dorlandus, *Chron. Cartusiense*, 1608, p. 208, about 1175 A.D.). Many similar stories

<sup>1</sup> *De caetero*, a significant phrase which occurs more than once. The abbot's preamble implies also that the monks had already been long enough at Ottringham to draw his attention to the dangers of their position.

<sup>2</sup> One of the two MSS. puts this far more strongly, "not at all"—*minime*. Again, Burton has himself recorded how an early benefactor had given a house to the abbey on condition "that no married man or cohabiter with women might dwell upon it, to his own disgrace and to the offence of the brethren" (III, xlv, note 3).

are quoted by Martène in his commentary on ch. 66 of the Rule (ed. 1690, p. 866). In the Cistercian house of Sittichenbach, the early abbots had refused to display their wonder-working relics to the public, "fearing that the visits of these multitudes would hinder the keeping of the Rule"<sup>1</sup>. But, in process of time, the economic temptations became too great; the prevalent relic-worship invited experiments which might indeed be disapproved by saints in heaven, but which promised to loose the purse-strings of their worshippers upon earth. Shortly before 1349, Meaux procured a peculiarly sacred crucifix, and got leave from the General Chapter to admit even women to worship it. But devotion was no longer what it had been; poor Burton complains that, under pretext of this license, women flock frequently to the aforesaid crucifix, yet only to our detriment, since their devotion is but cold, and they do but come to gaze at our church and to increase our expenses by claiming hospitality<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, in Burton's time, we find a washer-woman attached to the monastery, in flat defiance of the statutes (III, lxxii).

For the monks themselves had long ceased to "labour" in the original sense; in the above-quoted constitutions for Ottringham there are three perfunctory allusions to "labor" as an alternative to "lectio," but the mere list of servants shows that this must have become a farce in Burton's time. Here, as elsewhere, the brethren did not even bear the brunt of their own gardening work; there were two paid gardeners (III, lxx). About 1230, the abbot had had considerable friction with the lay brethren, and had bound them all down to menial work; it was natural that the general decay should affect this class first, and that, by Burton's time, all the work should be done by hired servants.

Under these and similar relaxations, the visitatorial system proved altogether unequal to its task. The chronicler tells us how, in 1362, misdeeds were hushed up by open bribery (III, 150). "The Chapter General deputed Dom Raymund, professor of theology, to visit and reform all the monasteries of our Cistercian Order in England." The visitor came to Meaux with two English abbots and a monk of Savigny as his colleagues.

<sup>1</sup> Winter, I, 394; cf. AA.SS.O.S.B. saec. II, p. 1086; s. III, i, p. 581; ii, p. 478.

<sup>2</sup> III, 35 ff. The story is told in detail by M. Jusserand in his *Wayfaring Life*; it is translated from the original on p. 522 of my *Med. Garner*.



So the aforesaid Brother John of Rysley, ex-abbot, considering the coming of these abbots to reform our monastery, and fearing lest our [then] abbot Robert and the other monks should lay a complaint against him concerning his deeds during his abbacy, increased by the yearly value of 5 marks the rent which he paid for the church of Skipsey, which had been granted to him for a pension during the term of his natural life: moreover he resigned all his rights to cut faggots, pasture cattle, [and so forth], in the close called le Gayre.

John then bought himself a place among the monks of Roche, and lived till 1378 in contented impenitence (III, 111, 151). In this chronicle, as in nearly all others, we have plain evidence that the monks looked even more to an abbot's business qualities than to his other virtues. Burton himself, an admirable business man, came in by the retirement of William of Wendover, "a man more skilled in the cloister than in worldly affairs"—*magis expertus in claustro quam saeculo*. Dr Bond justly sums up the tone of the whole book (III, xxxix):

The character of the present chronicle, and equally of other records of religious houses, impresses the reader with the strong conviction that (despite the nominally severe routine of monastic life,) the temporal affairs of the house were the principal matter of concern with the majority of the inmates. The tone in which the different abbots are spoken of shows that those were held in highest estimation by the fraternity who evinced most acuteness in conducting the secular business of the house... In the list drawn up by Burton in the year 1393, full half the number are noted as holding offices requiring considerable attention to business... The Cistercian monks were employed also to overlook the lay brethren at the granges... The lawsuits again, from which they were never free, occasioned the employment of the monks in affairs which ought to have been considered very alien from their character. They certainly attended assizes as attorneys for the abbot and convent. They probably assisted in holding the manorial courts of the different estates of the house. Sometimes they would be despatched on a long journey to London to represent the convent at the court of the king's exchequer. And more often they would be sent on a still longer and more corrupting mission to the court of Rome, there to use intrigue and bribery to gain an advantage for their house, or to fight the battle of some of its members against the others<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Instances of these Roman journeys may be found I, 294; III, 116, 187. Compare similar evidence for the monks of Worcester in *L.A. Wilson*, pp. 255, 264.

We must remind ourselves again of that 66th chapter which is perhaps the most emphatic of the Benedictine Rule, and to which the great monastic reformers always strove to recall their brethren's attention.

Let the monastery, if possible, be so constructed that all things needful, such as water, the mill, the garden, the bakehouse and the other crafts may be within the precincts, so that no monk need to wander abroad; for this is altogether inexpedient for their souls. We desire that this rule be often read in the congregation, lest any brother excuse himself on the plea of ignorance<sup>1</sup>.

Long before the Dissolution, that clause of the Rule had practically become a dead letter with the Cistercians as with the older Benedictines.

For the same story, in effect, is told in the *Chronicon Campense*, the only other Cistercian chronicle I know of which extends in some real completeness even down to the later centuries, and thus marks all the medieval vicissitudes of the house<sup>2</sup>. Winter has pointed out how the downward trend of the Order comes out very clearly in this intimate record; and his laborious researches among the other German Cistercians point clearly in the same direction<sup>3</sup>. Two sentences summarize, as in a nutshell, his long and detailed description of the movement:

The fourteenth century falls into two equal portions. Both are alike marked by the universal decay of discipline in the Order; but there is this difference that, whereas in the first period we mark an attempt to stem this corruption by new decrees, even this attempt is abandoned in the second period (III, 1).

Nor is this decay of the Cistercian reform merely accidental; it followed necessarily, if for brevity's sake we may use so absolute a word, from the nature of the institution, and from the circumstances of Church and State in the Middle Ages. No single fraction of society can maintain indefinitely a religious and moral temperature very high above that of the rest; while the good gains ground by proselytizing, it loses by contamination with the unredeemed multitude; there is no medieval author, so far as I know, who does not recognize this in the

<sup>1</sup> It is extremely probable that this last sentence refers not to c. 66 only, but to the whole Rule; see above, Chapter XIII *ad init.*

<sup>2</sup> It is printed in Eckertz, II, 329 ff.

<sup>3</sup> II, 156-7, 175; III, 1 ff., 21 ff., 109 ff.

Cistercian Order. After the first murmurs of *pharisee!* and *unco-guid!* which we have heard from rivals like the Cluniacs—and we have seen also how the best of the Cluniacs hold different language among themselves—there is no farther hint, I believe, that the Cistercian ideal was mistaken; Popes chose Cistercian visitors, by preference, for a century after Bernard's death; and it was generally recognized that the Order had aimed at a very real return to primitive Benedictine life. But, in an age when a Pope could proclaim to a world-council that "the prelates were the ruin of the world," and yet the worst prelates were often those of papal creation<sup>1</sup>, and when there was no discipline anywhere in the Church which might not be undermined at any moment by an appeal to the papal court—in that age, with a lay society still less disciplined than the Church, strict Benedictinism was impossible except in holes and corners. We have seen how Imbart de la Tour emphasizes the frustration of later Cistercian reforms by the action of the papal court; but in fact that action was fatal almost from the beginning. Let us hear another orthodox Catholic on that subject. Hoffmann, in explanation of the fact that there was little difference, from a business point of view, between the thirteenth century Cistercians and other Orders, writes (*l.c.* pp. 721-2):

But, side by side with the changes which time had brought into the economic situation in general, there were also causes within the Order which worked for a change in their economic practice. We think we have sufficiently indicated, in our previous discussions, the chief of these causes—*i.e.* the acquisitive instinct—*die Erwerbsucht*. This was distinctly responsible, in each abbey, for a strong emphasis on its own particular interests; and this, again, led either to open violation of the principles of the Order or to struggles at Rome for papal dispensations from the economic restrictions, since it was not yet possible, at this date, to get such dispensations from the General Chapter. Although this circumvention of the supreme authority in the Order was strictly forbidden from the very earliest Cistercian times, yet it was of frequent occurrence. Moreover, worse still, when one abbey had obtained a grace of this kind in consideration of special circumstances, others would act on the principle that what is just in one case is fair in another, and would extend these privileges to their own business affairs without farther authority. Pope Alexander III complained of this to the abbots assembled in General Chapter: "We

<sup>1</sup> *From St Francis to Dante*, ch. xxi (2nd ed. p. 283).

hear that some of you forget the old institutes, and, contrary to the honour and good repute of the Order, possess manors, mills, churches and altar-dues, cause tenants to swear you homage, possess bondmen and tributary peasants, and strive with all your might to extend your lands... This is an inward canker of your Order... If you wish to abandon the original statutes of the Order and to stand in the same line with other abbeys, then we must measure you with the same rule as them. When, however, the Apostolic See has granted a dispensation with regard to possessions to one of your abbeys, then another must not take example from this; for it is unmeet that any man should appropriate to himself, of his own authority, that which the papal See hath granted to another, as a special indulgence, under careful consideration of the circumstances."

And this, as Hoffmann reminds us, is "the period which is universally described as the meridian of the Order" (p. 725). He ends by pleading justification for these changes, as a necessary adaptation to the altered circumstances of "a time when money in a special sense was beginning to rule the world." From the purely economic point of view, that extenuating plea is undoubtedly right; but it was not economic orthodoxy which had constituted the real strength of the early Cistercians. The moment they tried, like the older Benedictines, to make the most of both worlds, their ruin became only a question of time.

## CHAPTER XXX

### EPILOGUE

As it was not possible to complete the Cistercian story without transgressing the strictest limits of time prescribed for this volume, so also I must to some extent anticipate the reader's final judgement on the Reformation. The medieval belief that the enormous majority of God-created souls are doomed to everlasting and unspeakable torments is, to all practical purposes, as dead now as the belief in Jupiter. In the Church that claims most direct and legitimate descent from the Church of the Middle Ages, no preacher of today would dare to tell his hearers what even the great Massillon repeated with docile orthodoxy only two centuries ago. No man of real distinction and authority would dare now to argue as Bossuet did, that any theology is patently absurd, on the face of it, if it implies the possible salvation of heathen infants<sup>1</sup>. Again, if St Bernard were to appear among us tomorrow, what percentage of his own Frenchmen could he persuade into the cloister? or, to go still closer to the root of the matter, who will venture to assert that he would himself choose the cloistered life? Must we, therefore, condemn our fathers for having been what they were, or condemn those of our own generation for being so different from their fathers?

The historian struggles daily to understand each man in his own environment, to bridge distances of time and space, and to separate the transitory from the eternal. There is one consistent thread running through the struggle for human progress; but this thread is mingled, at every moment, with a thousand inconsistencies and contradictions. Fontenelle, who was Massillon's contemporary, wrote thus of his own parents: "Mon père était une bête, mais ma mère avait de l'esprit; elle était quiétiste; c'était une petite femme douce qui me disait souvent: *Mon fils, vous serez damné*; mais cela ne lui faisait point de peine"<sup>2</sup>. Here was feminine inconsequence; or rather, the inconsequence of

<sup>1</sup> *Variations*, bk II, c. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ste-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, III, 316.

ninety-nine minds out of a hundred at all times and places. Minds more logical and more serious, on the other hand, were seldom hopelessly perplexed; they stressed the plain truth that life is full of apparent contradictions; and, without for a moment doubting this wholesale damnation, they anchored themselves firmly on their ultimate conviction of God's goodness, and of some wise though inscrutable purpose underlying all things. That which differentiates us from them—that which may even shock us in them—was rather an accident of their faith. The essence of their faith was, that there is good in the universe for those who choose to find good; and that, if a man allows insoluble perplexities to paralyze him, this betokens rather infirmity than nobility of mind. Many pagan superstitions clung not only to the medieval multitude, but even to the average and the more-than-average man; moreover, those ages had evolved other superstitions peculiar to themselves, and there can be no true picture of the thirteenth century which ignores these things. The truth has never yet been told; within this volume, I have tried to tell it in St-Simon's spirit; "la même charité, qui impose toutes ces obligations, n'impose pas celle de ne pas voir les choses et les gens tels qu'ils sont"<sup>1</sup>. It is only by comparison with the average man of any generation that we can measure the full greatness of his leaders; Richalm helps to explain St Bernard; the pagan accretions of those centuries bring out still more clearly the greatness of the elect souls whose life and teaching, beneath this dross, were so truly Christian in essence. Such men remain still, and will remain to all time, in essential harmony with all the highest ideals of Western or Eastern civilization; they fulfil that sentence of the mystic Eckhart: "Besser ein Lebemeister als tausend Lesemeister"<sup>2</sup>.

So also with the Rule by which they lived. Its institution marks an epoch in history. In practice, it exercised an enormous influence on European society; in essence, it bears the closest kinship to many earlier forms, and many modern forms, of life-

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, ed. 1829, tom. I, p. xiv. See the whole long passage, from p. vi onwards: "Mais un chrétien, et qui veut l'être, peut-il écrire et lire l'histoire?... la charité peut-elle s'accommoder du récit de tant de passions et de vices?... une innocente ignorance n'est-elle pas préférable à une instruction si éloignée de la charité?" etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> W. R. Inge, *Christian Mysticism* (1899), p. 161.

dedication. We may face the fact that its disintegration was due mainly to internal causes, and we may note its practical disappearance from the modern world, without any injustice to those earlier monks who stood above ordinary humanity as champions of a system which was good for them, though not for us. In virtue of their close-knit and widespread associations, they set an example which we must follow, or we shall go back; no merely scattered and parochial ideals will ever influence society as this ecclesiastical solidarity of the Middle Ages influenced it. But the monastery, like the gild, had its exclusive side also; Jerome, at the very beginning, had warned the monk against his temptation to "holy selfishness"<sup>1</sup>; in that respect, this "perfect Christian" had grasped most imperfectly the mind of Christ. To quote again from Eckhart, the true Christian will do what he can to avoid peculiarities of dress and food and language; he will remember that it is often more possible to be lonely in a crowd than in the wilderness<sup>2</sup>.

*Clastra castra*; so wrote Hugues de Fouillois to his fellow-Augustinians in the twelfth century<sup>3</sup>. The claustral buildings are our fortified camp; here we may indeed be exposed to the busiest attacks of the demon, but here we certainly have the surest defence. The supine dwellers in the open country are already subdued, the Old Enemy holds them in eternal thralldom to sin; it is chiefly in the camp that he finds organized resistance, and, even there, he sometimes bursts in. But there, after all, is the safest spot on earth—*claustrum, id est, Dei castrum*—the cloistered and fugitive virtue is Religion *par excellence*. St Bernard, again, works out the same idea;

this house of ours, my brethren, is the city of the Everlasting King, beleaguered by His enemies. . . . Certainly that man would have robbed Christ of His best fortress who should betray Clairvaux to His foes. . . . That man, indeed, shall be damned not to a common death; he must needs perish in exquisite torments; but I will here dwell no longer on those things<sup>4</sup>.

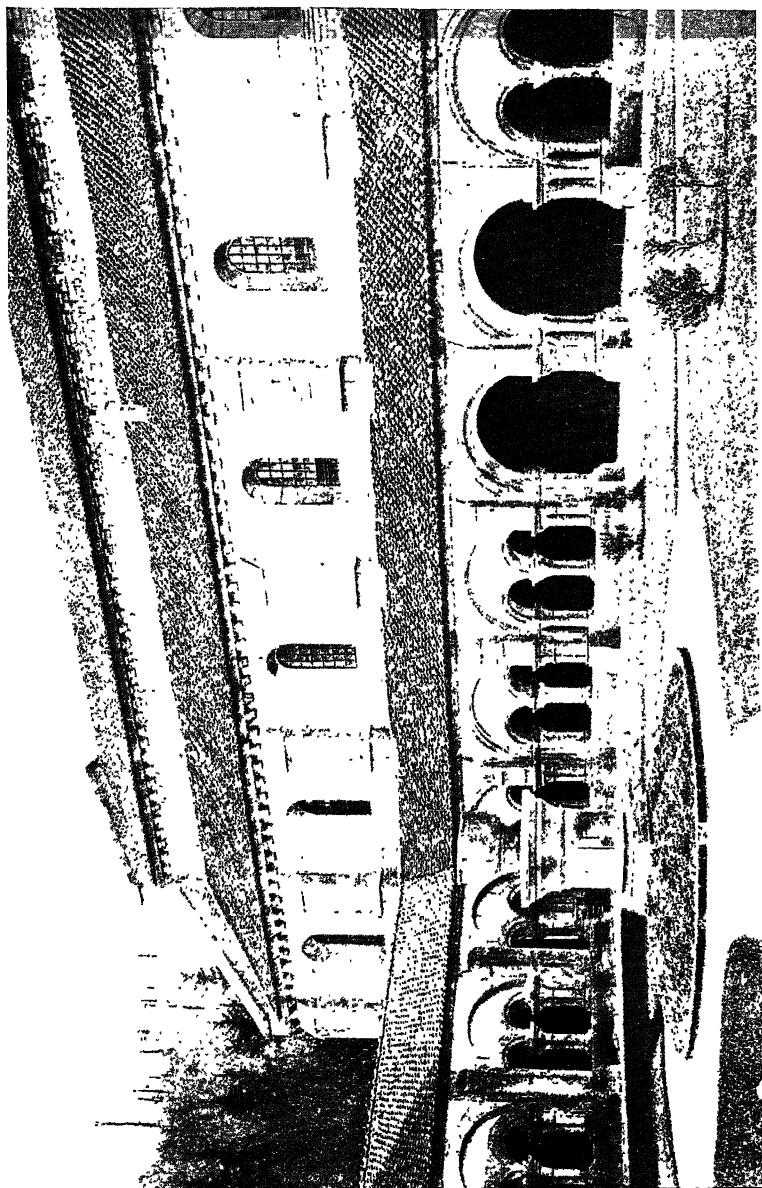
Hugh of St-Cher, as befits a great and popular Dominican

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 22, col. 542.

<sup>2</sup> *L.c.*

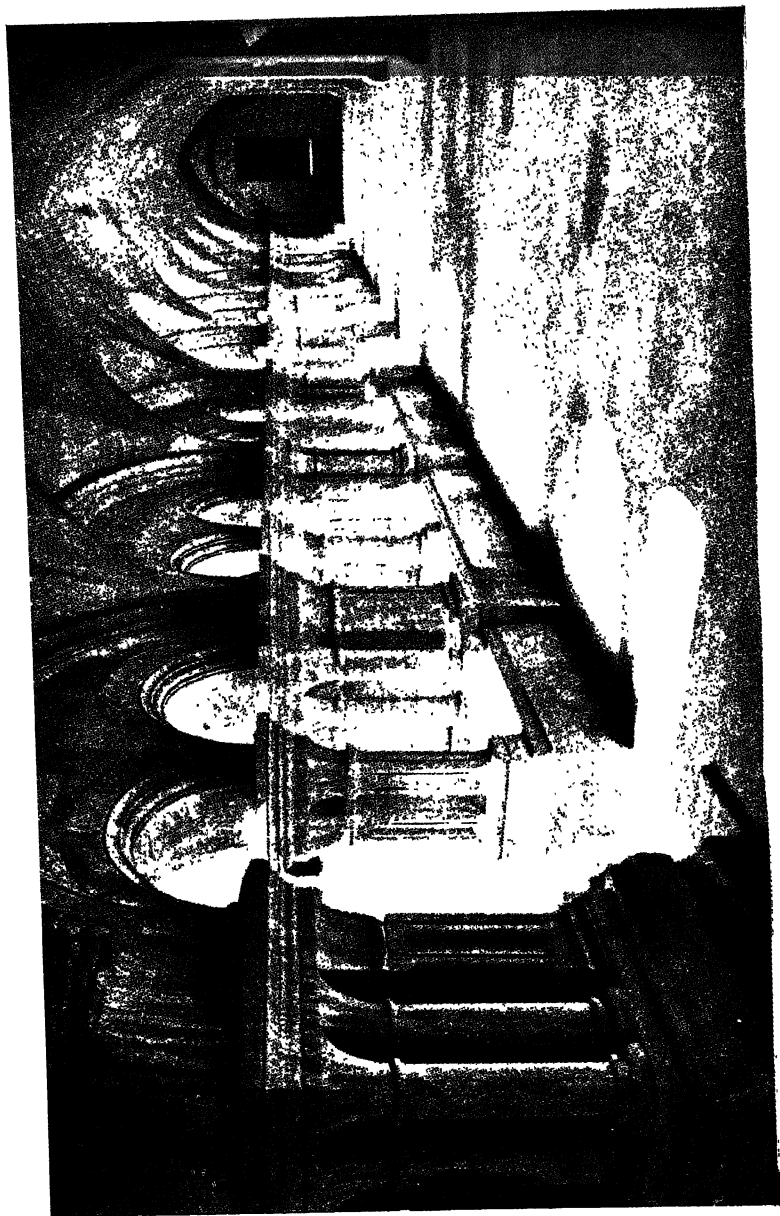
<sup>3</sup> *De Claustro Animae*, P.L. vol. 176, cols. 1020-1. The treatise was often attributed to the greater Augustinian mystic, Hugh of St Victor.

<sup>4</sup> *In Ded. Ecclesiae*, Sermon. III, §§ 1, 3.



FONTENAY CLOISTER-GARTH





FONTENAY CLOISTER (EASTERN WALK)

preacher, is still more homely in his attempt to enforce this doctrine of claustral defence against the devil<sup>1</sup>.

Note that the cloister may well be called a city, not only as being fortified but also as having a law and a king of its own; for the brethren have one mode of life under one Rule, and they have a community which riseth up in prayer against the demons who tempt any one of them. . . . Moreover, they are enclosed as birds in a cage: yet note that birds love not to dwell ever in cages, but oftentimes think of escape, though they are much better fed in cages than abroad. So is it with many cloisterers, and specially those who take the vows because of the poverty which they suffer in the world. . . . But let them beware of thinking upon escape; for the cat (that is the devil) lieth in wait for them as for birds, that at least he may devour their heads.

Yet, even while Hugues de Fouilloy and Bernard were writing, the great University movement of the Middle Ages was germinating, and in St-Cher's days it was at its height, and the Franciscans and Dominicans had already relaxed the stricter laws of claustration; so that the student and the friar did far more for later medieval civilization than the monk did. In a very real sense, it may be said that these two came to supersede the monk: *Ceci tuera cela*: the world was already outgrowing the cloister. The universities gradually sapped men's belief in the devil's personality and ubiquity: his orb has paled slowly through the ages, but the twilight, the *Teufelsdämmerung*, began at the end of the twelfth century, when Arabic philosophy was transplanted to Paris. The witch-finding manias of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, like the earlier *autos da fé*, mark a conscious reaction here; they testify to the hysteric fears of the conservative party in religion. Free-thought came into the universities with Aristotle and his Arabic commentators, as it would doubtless have come, though more gradually, with Aristotle alone; or, more slowly still, of its own accord. In Petrarch's time—that is, in the Italy that Chaucer knew—atheism and materialistic philosophies were extremely fashionable; before the Reformation had come, the "advanced" scholars of the University of Padua seem to have been as unorthodox as those of the present day<sup>2</sup>. And, deeply as this evolution in thought has influenced ideas on the personality of God, still more deeply

<sup>1</sup> VI, 303.

<sup>2</sup> Renan, *Averroës*, pt II, ch. iii.

has it undermined the personality of the devil, and the materialistic demonology which played so great a part among the orthodox of the Middle Ages. It has thus done much to remove one of the lower motives which drove men into the cloister; in weakening the negative side of religion, it has thrown earnest minds more upon the positive; it has begun to free humanity from the reproach which St-Simon fastens upon Louis XIV, that, in the last resort, what really restrained him was "la crainte du diable que Dieu lui laissa jusque dans ses plus grands désordres"<sup>1</sup>. Higher vocations to the monastic life we have still among us; but those higher vocations were comparatively rare even in the Middle Ages. The vocation of the bird shrinking from the cat, which was normal then, is beyond all comparison rarer now; and will grow rarer still as time wears on.

Medieval society, then, began to outgrow the cloister, and justly; for a cloistered Christianity could never, by itself, have subdued the world. How could Paul, as a cloisterer, have made himself all things to all men, or been free to preach everywhere, in season and out of season? How could Christ, under the Benedictine vows, have eaten and drunken daily with publicans and sinners? In so far as Bernard did these things, he did them less in virtue of his profession than in spite of it. The monk, writes Jerome, cannot attain to perfection among his own people<sup>2</sup>; in Bernard's words, he must flee from the Babylon of common humanity, or their evil communications will corrupt his good manners<sup>3</sup>; Gregory the Great lamented that even pastoral duties brought their earthly dust to contaminate his cloister-seeking soul<sup>4</sup>; Thomas à Kempis writes:

One said, "As oft as I have been among men, I returned home less a man than I was before"; and this we find true, when we talk long together... It is easier for a man to lie hid at home, than to watch over himself abroad

—and *home*, to Thomas and his first readers, was the cloister<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires* (1829), tom. XIII, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 22, col. 352.

<sup>3</sup> Epp. 107, § 13, 322, § 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Dialogues*, pref. to Book I. For many other similar quotations see Martène's commentary on ch. 66 of the Rule, s.v. *ut non sit necessitas*, etc.

<sup>5</sup> *Imitation*, bk I, ch. xx, § 2. The quotation is from Seneca. The English translations often obscure the almost exclusively monastic intention of the *Imitatio*.

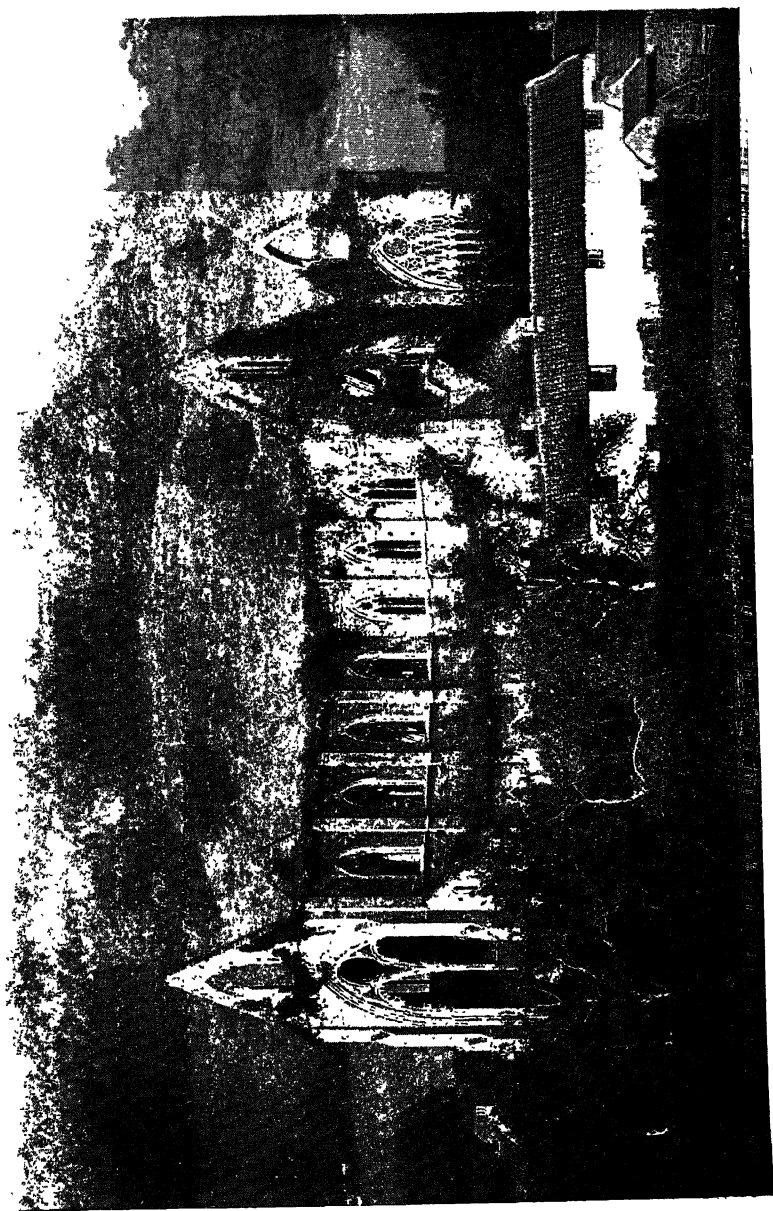
An institution, as Hoffmann rightly pleads, must adapt itself to changes of environment if it is to survive; and, so far, he succeeds in justifying the changes in Cistercian economic policy. But, in the spiritual sphere, the monk did not keep pace with his environment; in so far as he kept his Rule at all, he was trying to live all through the later medieval centuries in that same seclusion which had been healthy and natural in Benedict's wild half-heathen age. In actual fact, his life had taken a definite colour from its environment, but never in theory; he still pleaded deadness to the world, even while he had accustomed himself to many worldly indulgences. In 1200, as in 1100, Europe possessed men of the type of the early Cistercians; again, there were such men at the Reformation; there have been such in all times and countries to the present day; men of whom it may be said with some real truth that, like Jesus, they "despaired of nobody except a Pharisee, and counted nothing common or unclean"<sup>1</sup>. But already in 1200, as I hope to show in my next volume, men of this exceptional type were often striving in a new direction; my third volume will trace a fresh and still farther change of ideal; until, in this twentieth century, the impulse to preach truth and to sacrifice self-interest seldom takes any tinge whatever of monasticism. There has been a vast, though slow, evolution; future centuries will see even greater changes; and all these are in harmony with the deepest spirit of Christianity.

*Claustra castra* was a true and brave word for its own time, when a man had scarcely any other high ideal to choose; when, outside the cloister, it was often almost physically impossible to live a decent life; and when the Christian could hold his ground only by digging himself in; then, the natural cry was "Back to the camp!" But the natural necessities of those centuries must not make us forget that far earlier exhortation of the writer to the Hebrews: "Christ suffered without the gate; let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach; for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." In civilization, as in war, there is a time to dig ourselves in, and a time to go over the top. The royal banners forward go—*vexilla regis prodeunt*—and the most elaborate system of entrenchment, as time crawls on, must some day prove a mere

<sup>1</sup> Inge, *l.c.* p. 231.

hindrance. The monasticism of the later Middle Ages was all the more fatally obsolete because it still claimed to represent the very essence of living Christianity. The true monk lived a noble life, but it was not really Christ's life; the totality of monks, at their best, formed one of the most remarkable and beneficent social organisms known to history; yet this body, even at its very best, was far indeed from "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Nevertheless, to the very last, it claimed that respectful deference and those privileges which society would willingly have granted to a full and living embodiment of Christianity; the real tragedy of later monasticism is that it was never willing to recognize how far it was drifting behind its own times; it knew not the time of its visitation. The medieval Benedictines, as a whole, entirely failed to realize that the directest imitation of Christ must necessarily imply moving and working freely among the unredeemed multitude: "let us go forth unto Him without the camp." A body which feared contamination of morals or of creed by mixing daily among the unsaved, lacked one essential element of the earliest Christian faith; and, failing to admit its own limitations, it lacked that self-knowledge which is always and everywhere essential to true success.

The English monastic ruin, standing up from the grass as "a specimen of the Middle Ages put on a bit of velvet carpet"; the French ruin, overgrown with shrubs behind some farmyard or modern factory; the German cloister turned by the Reformers into a school or a hospital, and still bearing the burden of life under different conditions—each suggests in its own way the vicissitudes of time, and of man the child of time. Except for this, they are often unintelligible to the frankly modern spirit, if not positively repellent. Why should we care for people not only so distant in time, not only so alien in thought, but even inspired here and there, and very deeply inspired, by ideas abhorrent to the majority of their own spiritual descendants? If we ourselves hold some beliefs for which St Bernard or St Francis would have felt bound to burn us; and if, in our turn, we should look upon some of those saints' beliefs as almost too anti-social to be tolerated nowadays in full publicity—if we should feel the same misgivings about their preaching the pro-



TINTERN ABBEY



miscuous damnation of the unbaptized, and the Christian's duty of burning dissident fellow-Christians, as we feel now about Bolchevik or Mormon propaganda—if, in short, the closer study of their lives and thoughts rouses us not only to disagreement but sometimes to the most resolute repulsion—how can we feel in them more than the morbid interest of a dissector for mere dissection's sake?

Those who have never realized how the mere distance of place and thought, and even the occasional sting of instinctive antagonism, may make human beings all the more human to us, can never have read Dr Doughty's wonderful *Wanderings in Arabia*. Under that brazen sky and pitiless sun, men grow to something very unlike ourselves, and yet strangely and pathetically like, when somebody has the gift of seeing them and showing them as they are. In many ways, we could never reconcile ourselves to them; yet, in the main, they show us the deep-rooted brotherhood of man. We see in them something which we also are seeking—something far above and beyond us, and in which we all live and move and have our being. The very diversity and antagonism brings out the essential oneness:

for as the bodie is cladd in the cloath, and the flesh in the skinn, and the bones in the flesh, and the heart in the bulke, so are we, soule and bodie, cladd and enclosed in the goodnes of God: yea, and more homelie, for all they vanish and wast away, the goodnes of God is ever whole and more nere to us without any comparison<sup>1</sup>.

If Bernard, like his spiritual son Joachim, had found himself fever-stricken in Palestine, nursed back to life by Muslims, and the playmate of their children, then he would have recognized that these also, in their imperfect fashion, were struggling towards that abiding city which, for him, shone in dazzling splendour at the end of the plain and narrow way<sup>2</sup>. Is it a modern thinker's strength, or his weakness, if he cannot take the same patience with St Bernard, and comprehend this other man's way while resolutely preferring his own? Is the liberal of today less tolerant and receptive than the Muslim mystic of the Middle Ages, who, in the fullest intoxication of his own soul-

<sup>1</sup> Juliana of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. Tyrrell, ch. vi, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> I deal with Joachim of Fiore, saint and seer, at the beginning of vol. II.



sight, willingly recognized the Christian monk as a younger brother?

In memory of the Beloved we quaffed a vintage that made us drunk before the creation of the vine. Time hath preserved of it but a breath; it oozed up from the inmost depth of the jars and vanished. Pure, but not as water; subtle, but not as air; luminous, but not as fire; spirit, but not joined to body. There is wine without a vine; its grapes were pressed in the winepress ere Time began. Health to the people of the Christian monastery! How often were they intoxicated with it without having drunk thereof! Still, they aspired<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> R. Ibnu'l Farid, translated by R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (1921), pp. 184 ff. I have here chosen only a few verses, but have spared the reader all marks of omission. The poet, born about 100 years later than St Bernard, was a younger contemporary of Joachim.

## APPENDIXES

THE number and length of these appendixes can only be justified by the claim that I am trying for the first time to write the history of these five centuries from original documentary sources. In so far as the reader admits this claim, I trust he will be rather inclined to credit than debit this mass of further evidence to my account.

### I

## MONASTIC HISTORY

Montalembert's weakness is becoming more and more evident to scholars of his own communion; Abbot Cabrol hints plainly at it when he writes: "Montalembert needed scarcely anything more than to run through them [Mabillon's *Acta Sanctorum* and *Annales*] in order to find, cut and dried for his use, the materials for that fine book, so incomplete and unequal, which is entitled *The Monks of the West*" (*Mélanges Mabillon*, Introd. p. xiv). Lord Acton spoke far more frankly, as he had the right. He characterized *The Monks of the West* as "a book with a tendency, not written for learning's sake, but for an external political momentary purpose, therefore without the dignity of real history in its design, though very good in great part of the execution" (*Lord Acton and his Circle*, p. 198). Abbot Butler, in his recent *Benedictine Monachism*, is again frankly dependent upon Newman and other even less trustworthy modern authorities for the later medieval centuries<sup>1</sup>. *The Black Monks of St Benedict*, by Father Ethelred Taunton, is superficial and untrustworthy for this period; a large proportion of his evidence is avowedly taken from modern sources, and his too rare references to original documents, on closer inspection, do not speak strongly either for his width of reading or his accuracy. Canon J. O. Hannay's *Spirit and Origin of Christian Monasticism*, Fr Bede Jarrett's *The Religious Life*, and Dom Germain Morin's *L'Idéal Monastique* are rather expressions of a personal mood; their value is devotional, not historical. Those who desire a sober and balanced résumé of monastic history must go to a hand-book like Dr H. B. Workman's *Evolution of the Monastic Ideal*<sup>2</sup>, or to such dry conspectuses as O. Zöckler's *Askese und Mönchthum* and M. Heimbucher's *Orden und Kongregationen*. For a more detailed view of monastic life we must go back to T. D. Fosbroke's *British Monachism*, first published in 1802, which, with all its faults, does at least repose upon original documents with full references, and does not stop short just where Mabillon happens to end.

<sup>1</sup> See the present writer's review in *The Hibbert Journal* for Jan. 1920.

<sup>2</sup> Which, however, becomes weaker from the thirteenth century onwards.

Cardinal Gasquet's *English Monastic Life* claims also to rely upon original documents; but its omissions and reticences do almost as much as its downright mis-statements to diminish its value for the serious reader. A notoriously inaccurate gossip like John Aubrey is quoted as "almost an eye-witness" of events from which he was actually separated by more years than those which separate this *English Monastic Life* from the Revolution of 1789; and his evidence is demonstrably false in most important particulars. Cardinal Gasquet's chapter on nunnery life, even more inaccurate than the rest, is prefaced by a complaint that "our information in regard to the inner life of nuns in pre-Reformation England is so scanty," which will startle readers of Miss Power's book. Worst of all, perhaps, is his habit of withholding references for the documents he claims to quote; he often actually wanders into circumlocution rather than give actual chapter and verse<sup>1</sup>. In a review of the Cardinal's most recent book, *Monastic Life in the Middle Ages*, in *The Nation and Athenaeum* for May 6, 1922, I pointed out that this lack of references covered a series of incredible liberties taken, even where the author vouched for accuracy by inverted commas. I have already pointed these things out plainly enough—some people may think, even too plainly—in my different *Medieval Studies*, and especially on pp. 116–20 of my first series (2nd edition). I may therefore dispense with detailed criticism in this volume, except where the Cardinal might seem to have produced actual documentary evidence for untenable or improbable contentions. In those cases I shall show counter-evidence; in others I shall state what I believe to be true without concerning myself whether another has written otherwise without documentary support. With *Henry VIII and the English Monasteries* I have to deal in my third volume; here I need only point out that the book ignores the whole mass of monastic evidence between St Anselm and 1500—in other words, at least three-quarters of the available evidence for the actual state of the monasteries during the Middle Ages—and distorts or mis-states a great deal of the evidence even between 1500 and 1540.

On the other hand, there is a mass of most valuable material scattered about in foreign monographs, among German *Doctoratsthesen*, in the *Revue Bénédictine* and in the *Studien und Mittheilungen aus dem Benediktiner- und Cistercienserorden*. These are mostly scholarly, and as impartial as can be expected from sincere Roman Catholics where their religion is concerned, or from sincere monks writing of their own profession. In so far as I have been able to exploit this material, it has been during the last few years, when my opinions on all main points were

<sup>1</sup> Here, for instance, are seven mockeries of references on pp. 52–6: "says one custumal" (twice repeated)—"what is called in one Rule. . ."—"says one Rule"—"as is frequently remarked in the old Customals"—"says one English writer" (twice repeated). This *one English writer* is, as it happens, the same as the *one custumal* of the previous page: an exact reference for the two would have been "*Chron. Abendon.* R.S. II, 356; *ibid.* 366"; the printer would have had less trouble, and the reader would have been in a position to verify the writer's statements.

already formed from the study of original documents; and their general agreement with my own results in detail, if not in the total estimate of monasticism, has brought me much encouragement. But such studies have themselves almost the nature of raw material; each separately covers a very narrow field; and, in spite of all the work done by modern Benedictines for their own history, no attempt has yet been made to supply, from original sources, any synthetic account of these five crucial centuries preceding the Reformation.

## 2

## THE MEDIEVAL HELL

## A. The blessed rejoice in the sight of the damned

Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*, c. 30; translated in the Oxford *Library of Fathers*, Tertullian, I (1842), 217. "But what sort of show is that near at hand? The Coming of the Lord, now confessed, now glorious, now triumphant... What shall then be the expanse of the show? whereat shall I wonder? whereat laugh? whereat rejoice? whereat exult? beholding so many kings, who were declared to be admitted into Heaven, with Jupiter himself and all that testify of him, groaning together in the lowest darkness? those rulers too, the persecutors of the Name of the Lord, melting amid insulting fires more raging than those wherewith themselves raged against the Christians; those wise philosophers moreover reddening before their own disciples, now burning together with them, whom they persuaded that there was nothing which appertained to God, before whom they affirmed that there were either no souls, or that they should not return again to their former bodies; poets too trembling before the judgement-seat, not of Rhadamanthus, not of Minos, but of the unlooked-for Christ. There will the tragic actors be the more to be heard, because more loud in their cries amidst real affliction of their own; then the players to be recognized, more dissolute by far when dissolved by fire; then the charioteer to be gazed on, all red upon his fiery wheel; then the wrestlers to be viewed tossing about, not in the theatre, but in the fire—unless perchance I may even then not desire to see them, as wishing rather to fix my gaze, never to be satisfied, on those who have *furiously raged against the Lord*. . . Such shows as these, such triumphs as these, what praetor, or consul, or quaestor, or priest, shall of his own bounty bestow upon thee? and yet we [Christians] have them even now in some sort present to us, through Faith, in the imagination of the spirit."

This became a commonplace throughout the Middle Ages; the most temperate statement is, as usual, in Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*, Supp. quaest. xcvi, art. 3. Aquinas begins, in due scholastic form, by stating the objections to his doctrine, but sweeps them away with quotations

from Isaiah lxvi, 24, and Ps. lvii, 11 (Vulg.): "The just shall rejoice when he shall see the revenge; he shall wash his hands in the blood of the sinner." The saints, he explains, like God Himself, rejoice in the sinner's pains not *per se* but *per accidens*; God rejoices in them "in so far as they are ordained by His justice," and the blessed, "considering in them the order of Divine justice, and their own deliverance." This verse of the Psalm is equally conclusive to other theologians, who do not always preserve Aquinas's moderation of statement; e.g. Bonaventura, *In Sent.* lib. iv, dist. 1, pt ii, art. 1, quaest. 3 (ed. Quaracchi, iv, 1049 b); Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.* (1624), p. 1332; Hugh of St Victor (P.L. vol. 176, col. 609); Thomas Wallensis, *Flores Doctorum*, s.v. *infernus*, p; and the excellent Humbert de Romans, whose long experience as mission-preacher and as head of the Dominican Order still left it possible for him to count the existence of hell as one of the main factors in the bliss of the elect: "first, seeing that they themselves have escaped it; secondly, seeing that their enemies will there be tortured (Ps. lvii, 11); and thirdly, seeing that sin, which hath done most harm to men, will be shut up in hell as in its own place" (p. 733 E, F).

## B. Infant perdition

I have dealt with this in the 16th of my *Medieval Studies* (*Infant Perdition in the Middle Ages*, Simpkin, Marshall and Co.), and need summarize only briefly here. St Gregory of Nazianzus and Tertullian speak of possible happiness for unbaptized "innocents," but only in a casual way; and they give reasons which would have been condemned by all the later Middle Ages as heretical. St Augustine dealt with the subject frequently and expressly; he has no doubt that such will be "punished" in "hell," but holds that their pains will be "the mildest of all." St Fulgentius, after him, represents the general feeling of the African Church in laying down as an essential article of orthodox faith that unbaptized infants "shall be punished with the torment of eternal fire." Early Popes, so far as their opinions can be gathered, seem rather to have inclined this way; and, even in the eleventh century, we find St Anselm on this side. His far less orthodox contemporary, Abailard, was the first to lead a revolt against the Augustinian rigorism; Abailard's pupil, Peter Lombard, followed his master in denying bodily pain and leaving only the pain of loss of the Vision of God. St Thomas Aquinas and most of the later Schoolmen ventured still farther; with the help of great logical subtleties, they persuade themselves that Church tradition does not preclude the children in their Limbo from "natural" (as distinguished from "supernatural") happiness<sup>1</sup>. When the Renaissance comes, liberal thinkers like Savonarola, Erasmus and More go a little farther still. Yet, in the meanwhile, two Ecumenical Councils pronounced for the stricter view. The Second of Lyons (1274) implicitly

<sup>1</sup> Yet even Aquinas does not permit mothers to pray for unbaptized children; and the little bodies were forbidden Christian burial in holy ground (*Sum. Theol. Sup.* q. lxx, art. 7; Nider, *Preceptorium*, prec. iii, cap. iii e).

accepted it as a declaration of orthodox faith that these infants "go down at once to hell, to be punished, however, with different punishments [from those inflicted upon actual sinners]." The Council of Florence (1439) explicitly declared the same, carefully repeating the identical phrase. Savonarola and Erasmus, and the More of *Utopia* were thinkers who have left their mark upon the modern world; but, on questions of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, their judgement cannot be set up for a single moment against that of two popes in two Ecumenical Councils.

And, if the highest dogmatic authorities were thus in disagreement with the charity of most Schoolmen, so also, apparently, was the multitude. The refinements by which Aquinas succeeded in convincing himself do not seem to have made a full and abiding impression upon the more practical men whose main duty was to exhort monks or lay congregations to good life and right faith<sup>1</sup>. Ailred of Rievaulx to his monks, and other preachers to their congregations, speak in language which must sadly have distressed the large majority of loving mothers. When Luther and Calvin had arisen, and a whole body of counter-reforming Catholic scholars arose to combat their doctrines, the Augustinian side was taken by perhaps the two greatest of these scholars—the Jesuits Bellarmine and Petavius, who explicitly deny happiness to such children, and who adduce conclusive historical proof that the Schoolmen were exceptional in their mercy. Even Bossuet, and a great scholar like his contemporary De Noris, Cardinal and Papal Librarian, took the same strict view. And the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, drawn up by a papal commission as an unerring guide to priests and their flocks, lays it down that unbaptized infants, "be their parents Christian or infidel, are born to eternal misery and perdition" (authorized translation by Prof. Donovan, Manchester, 1855, p. 167; *Of Baptism*, quest. xxx). For the arguments by which the Roman Church of today has persuaded itself that these words mean "they will eternally enjoy a state of perfect natural happiness," I must refer my readers to my 16th *Medieval Study*, or to the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. *Limbo*. The really important point is, that Catholic Churchmen of today would not dream of describing this condition in the words in which it was described at Lyons, at Florence, and after Trent.

But there is another side to this subject. The Augustinian theory of original sin necessarily implied a low view of the marriage state. Augustine forged this theory in the heat of controversy; and medieval orthodoxy frequently followed him into his least flattering conclusions.

<sup>1</sup> This was the more natural, that Augustine's dismal verdict (or rather, St Fulgentius's decision, wrongly attributed to St Augustine) was formally enshrined in Canon Law, from which the great fifteenth-century preacher Meffret quotes it to his congregation: "Hold fast to this truth, that not only men of rational age, but even babes who, having begun to live in the mother's womb, either die there, or die after birth unbaptized in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, pass from this world to be punished in eternal fire" (Gratian, *Decretum*, pars III, dist. iv, c. 3).

They held a sort of dualism which, in spite of occasional lip-homage to matrimony, never hesitated to exalt virginity as the nobler state. Here, as on many other points of the monastic ideal, St Jerome's words are epoch-making and are passed from generation to generation of medieval writers as a classical commonplace: "Marriage peoples the earth, but virginity peoples heaven" (P.L. vol. 23, col. 246). And it is Jerome, (unless Tertullian preceded him in a lost book which he quotes), who sets the example of depreciating married life with coarse and sometimes prurient satire (*ibid.* 213-4, 288-91; cf. vol. 22, cols. 395-8, 407-8, 415, 423, 550, 730, 731, 1056-7, 1116)<sup>1</sup>. A similar zest in quotations from the prurient satire of Theophrastus, and in misogynistic texts culled from the Bible, is shown in the treatise *De Nuptiis* which often passed under the great name of Hugh of St-Victor (P.L. vol. 176, cols. 1205 ff., especially 1215). This exaltation of virginity by emphasis on the possible squalors of matrimony reaches its culmination in the religious treatise on *Hali Meidenhad* (E.E.T.S. 1866). Every possible excuse was found for distorting biblical interpretation in this sense: Jerome remarks more than once that the unclean animals went into the Ark two by two; that two is notoriously a "bad" number, whereas odd numbers are "good" (Noah and his fellowship numbered 7); therefore there is a taint of uncleanness in matrimony, which is essentially a pairing-system! (P.L. vol. 22, cols. 406, 509; cf. vol. 23, col. 1099). St Augustine implies the same; Christ had no original sin because "non ibi fuit complexus maritalis" (Sermon 294; P.L. vol. 28, col. 1341). In another treatise which the Middle Ages attributed to Augustine, but which was in fact by the monk-bishop Fulgentius of a century later, the most literal deductions are drawn from Ps. 1, 7, Vulg. (li, 5, A.V.): "Behold, I was conceived in iniquities, and in sins did my mother conceive me." He argues: "Since, when man and woman are commingled for the generation of children, there is no such commerce of parents without taint of lust, therefore the children born of their flesh cannot be conceived without sin; which sin is transmitted to the child not by propagation, but by lust"; hence the taint of original sin (Migne, P.L. vol. 40, col. 753). This is quoted with approval in 1431 by Cardinal Juan Torquemada, in a book which contains other authorities to the same effect<sup>2</sup>. Similarly, St Odo, abbot

<sup>1</sup> Jerome protests more than once that he intends no real disrespect to matrimony; yet he not only quotes approvingly, and at length, Theophrastus's satire on the married state, but even in his allowance for married folk he is almost more severe than in his satire. "The church doth not condemn matrimony, but putteth it lower; it doth not cast it off, but alloweth it by dispensation, . . . in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay"; "we have drinking-cups; and we have pots for more uncomely purposes"—*est crater ad bibendum, et matula ad secretiora naturae* (P.L. vol. 22, col. 1052; vol. 23, col. 282).

<sup>2</sup> Joh. de Turrecremata, *Tractatus de Veritate Conceptionis B.V.M.* ed. E. B. Pusey, 1869, pp. 36, 40, 41, 289; cf. xxvii, where the future Pope Clement VI, then Cardinal Abp. of Rouen, is quoted as saying: "Dico hoc unum esse clarum, quod Beata Virgo secundum sententiam sanctorum doctorum fuit in originali peccato concepta. Ratio autem hujus est quia fuit ex

of Cluny, who was one of the greatest churchmen of the tenth century, asks, "Why does God condemn to all eternity an infant born of lawful wedlock and conceived at a permitted season, even though it die before it can have committed sin? Since it is certainly not punished for its own sin, plainly this must be for the sin which is committed at the moment of its conception. If therefore there is so much guilt in conjugal commerce that the infant earns just punishment for that fault alone, how much is there in adultery, or in pollutions committed for the sole satisfaction of lust?" (*Collationes*, lib. II, c. xxiv; P.L. vol. 133, col. 568). That was, in fact, the general orthodox doctrine; Aquinas's statement of it is only more cautious in language; fundamentally it is the same (*Sum. Theol.* I a, q. xcvi, art. 2, cf. *Speculum Doctrinale*, lib. III, dist. xiv, pars iii). Even the robust sense of Langland puts Matrimony lowest on the Tree of Life, beneath Virginity and Widowhood (*P. Plowman*, c. XIX, 84); St Bonaventura decides that there is no *aureola* in heaven for married folk—unless, of course, they may have earned that of martyrdom by giving their lives for the Faith (*In. Lib. Sent.* I. IV, dist. xxvi, dub. 3). See also Meffret, *Fest.* p. 30; Berchorius, I, 44; AA.SS. Boll. Maii, VI, 38; Pez, *Blannbekin*, p. 195. How difficult it would have been for the Church to avoid this disparagement of matrimony in her earlier persecuted days, may be gathered from Tertullian, *ad uxorem*, I, § 5, and *de exhortatione castitatis*, § 12; Augustine, *de nuptiis et concupiscentia*, § 15, and *de bono conjugii*, § 10. It is complained, writes Tertullian, that we childless folk are not doing our duty by the next generation; "are you afraid, then, that your temples will be deserted, and that there may be no voices to cry, 'The Christians to the lions!' For that is what the men who desire children wish to hear." The Christian (he adds) is a soldier, a pilgrim; wife and children can only encumber him. It is this side of Christianity which survived, and even increased, in monasticism.

### C. The chances of hell

I need not deal here with the common thirteenth-century view of probable damnation for most Bishops, which has been sufficiently described in *From St Francis to Dante*, chap. xxi and notes; nor, again, with the well-known sentence in which John of Salisbury shows us that twelfth-century churchmen disputed whether it were possible for an Archdeacon to be saved<sup>1</sup>. I will here quote only a few instances of the general sense which orthodox teachers attached to those words, "many libidine et concubitu viri et mulieris concepta." Almost equally Manichaean is Guibert of Nogent in his *De Virginitate*, cap. VII (P.L. vol. 156, cols. 589-90). Cardinal Bellarmine held similar views even in the seventeenth century; in enumerating proof that the infant is the devil's prisoner until baptism, he writes: "Tertia ratio est ex circumcisionis mysterio... nam in eo membro fieri jussus est, in quo evidentius peccati illius [originalis] effectus apparet, et per quod genus humanum carnaliter propagatur, et propagatione inficitur" (*De Amiss. Gratiae*, lib. IV, c. 7).

<sup>1</sup> Ep. 166 (P.L. vol. 199, col. 156).



are called, but few are chosen." A few instances must be quoted to show how literally this terrible text was emphasized. Gautier de Coincy, like the English poet, assumes that those who have had the best of this life will probably have the worst of the next—the strong, the brave, the fair, the gentle—the ladies of great esteem who trail their costly furs of vair and gris, kings and queens, dukes and countesses—come crowding down to hell (Lommatzsch, p. 11). The similar passage in *Aucassin and Nicolette* is too well known for quotation. The orthodox medieval theory of predestination, even in its most moderate form as stated by St Thomas Aquinas, is seldom realized even by able and well-read Roman Catholics of today, who study St Thomas mainly in modern summaries. One of them, who discussed the subject in class with me some years ago, was startled when I showed him the saint's actual words (*Sum. Theol.* 1 a, q. xxiii, esp. art. 3). In common belief, there was far more fatalism than a philosopher like Aquinas would admit; a knight might sell his wife to the devil (*Golden Legend*, Assumption B.V.M. iv, 249). Similarly, a child might be cursed to hell from its cradle—nay, from the very moment of its conception; that is one of the most terrible of the Mary-legends (Gautier de Coincy, p. 443; Razzi, p. 154; Mussafia, I, 955 and II, 84). On the other hand, after 50 years of service to God in the monastery, a man might mysteriously fall (Cassian, *Coll.* II, c. 5). You could incautiously swallow a demon with a lettuce-leaf—a story repeated with special frequency through the Middle Ages, from St Gregory through Thomas Cantimpratanus and *The Golden Legend* to Nider. But the most instructive evidence comes from the great preachers or writers of preachers' manuals. Berthold of Regensburg says: "It is one of the greatest things and the greatest miracles that God even doth, when he receiveth a sinner who hath earned stinking hell, and giveth him the bliss of heaven. That is why we sing in holy Mass *mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis*; God is wonderful in His saints. And, because this is one of the greatest miracles, therefore are so few of them converted and so many damned; as a holy man saith, who saw many hundred thousand souls go their way to hell, and, in that same space, only three to heaven"<sup>1</sup>. "God," writes Cardinal Hugh of St-Cher in his great Bible commentary, "might have damned, and might still damn all men. . . No man could arraign His justice if He willed to damn us all." Therefore the damned are by far the greater number; at the Last Day the elect shall be "few in comparison with the evil; for 'the number of fools is infinite'"<sup>2</sup>. Bromyard tells us of a lost soul which appeared to its bishop, "and asked whether there was any living man now left upon earth? Whereunto the bishop made answer, 'Thou hast been dead but a few days, wherefore dost thou ask whether all the rest are dead in so short a time?' 'Because,' replied that other, 'more men have come down unto hell since my death than I could have believed to have existed on the earth in my life-days'" (c. v, 20).

<sup>1</sup> *Predigten*, I, 382.

<sup>2</sup> VII, 25, 2 and v, 118, 4. The Carlylean quotation is from Ecclesiastes I, 15, Vulg.

Herolt, telling the same tale, makes the dead man a Master of the University of Paris; and he recounts four other anecdotes to the same effect. In one, a dead Chancellor describes the lost souls falling perpetually into hell like snow from the sky; in another, the soul told how five thousand had died at the same time as he, and only four had been saved; in another, it was revealed to a bishop by a holy hermit "that 30,000 men died on the same day as I; of whom St Bernard and I alone went to heaven and three others to purgatory; all the rest went down to hell" (*Exempla*, D. 1-5; cf. *Serm. de Temp.* 149 L; Bromyard tells a similar story of the death of St Thomas of Canterbury—M. xi, 56; cf. I. xi, 24; P. xii, 44, 58). Equally significant is Herolt's whole sermon (No. 126) on that Gospel text Matt. xxii, 14. "If we believed that one man only, out of the whole human race, were destined to perdition, how ought each to fear lest he himself should be that one! . . . How much more, then, when He who knoweth all things saith that many are called and few are chosen? . . . Even as, at the Deluge, wherein eight persons only were saved in Noah's ark, while many thousands of men and women perished, in the flood, so doth this give us to understand that, as the eight thus saved were few in respect of that whole world of people that was drowned, so are those few who shall be saved, in respect of those who shall be damned, and who shall be almost beyond all numbering." The sermon proceeds in the same pessimistic strain. Herolt knows again, on the authority of "a certain necromancer who had been converted to the Faith," that the devils confess themselves to get more women than men for their prey, despite the fact that more males are "usurers, robbers, gamblers, adulterers, drunkards and blasphemers." The reason is "that women so often falsify their Catholic faith with witchcrafts and divinations, after the example of Eve, our first mother, who believed rather in the devil speaking through the serpent than in God Himself" (*Exempla*, S. vii). Similar pronouncements could be considerably multiplied; and it must be remembered that these were the books from which the better and more educated among the parish clergy took the material for their sermons. Even Aquinas speaks of the saved as "a few" and the damned as "very many" (*aliquos . . . plurimos*: *Sum. Theol.* 1 a, q. xxiii, art. 7). By far the most favourable statistical forecast which I have ever met is that of Humbert de Romans, who writes: "In the sea of Marseilles, scarce one ship in four perisheth; in the sea of this world scarce one soul in four cometh to the port of salvation" (p. 753 F). It would suit the facts on both sides if we supposed that the scribe had here mis-copied IV for M, and that Humbert had really written "scarce one in a thousand." So far as I know, it was mainly the mystics of the later Middle Ages, and especially the popular mystics, orthodox or unorthodox, who struggled against these barbarous conceptions. Rulman Merswin, the Strassburg banker, and Langland, the poor clerk who picked up his living as best he could "in London and on London both," grapple seriously with the problem. So does Juliana of Norwich, whose general outlook is that of robust optimism: "All shall be well, and all shall be

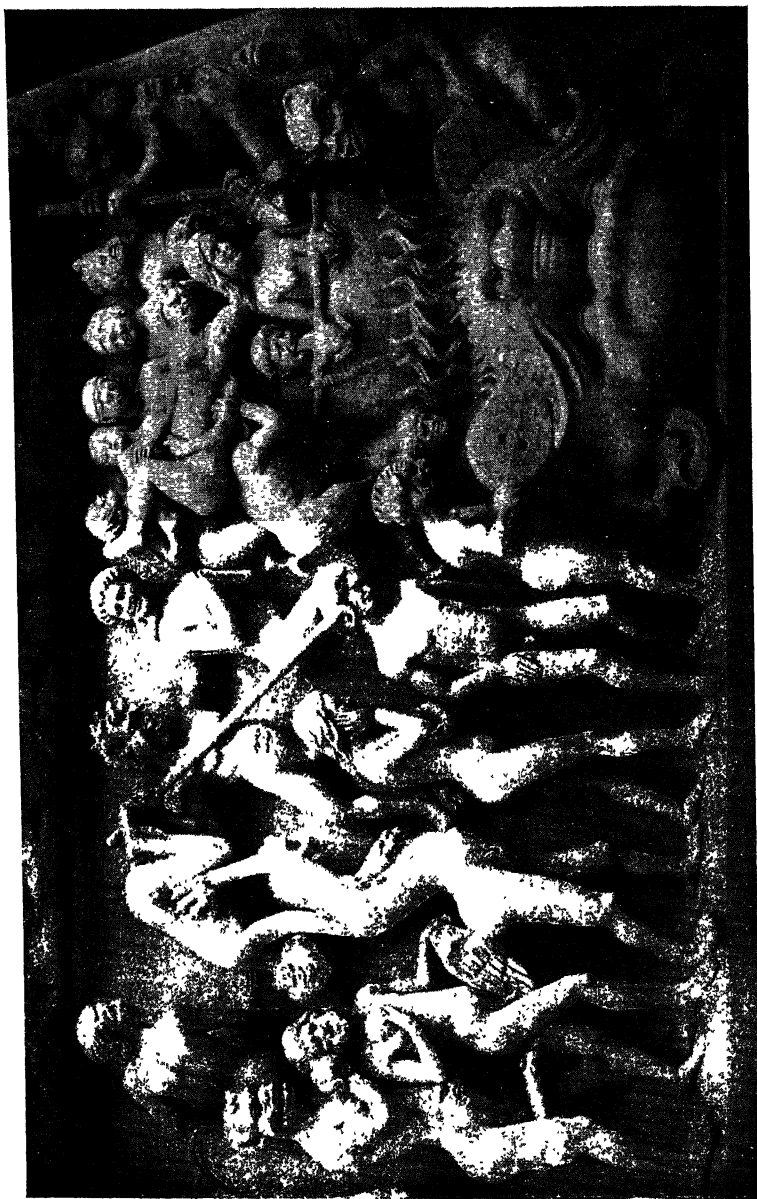
well, and all manner of thing shall be well." But how is this to be reconciled with contemporary belief? Only by implicit faith in the absolute goodness of God. As she is bound to confess to herself, "one point of our faith is, that many creatures shall be damned, as . . . many in earth that dieth out of the faith of Holy Church; that is to say, those that be heathen; and also many that hath received Christendom and liveth unchristian life and so dieth out of charity; all these shall be damned to Hell without end, as Holy Church teacheth me to believe; and, standing all this, methought it was impossible that all manner of thing should be well, as our Lord showed me in this time. And as to this I had no other answer, in showing of our Lord, but this: 'That which is impossible to thee is not impossible to Me; I shall save My word in all things, and I shall make all things well.' . . . For this is the great deed that our Lord God shall do; in which deed He shall save His word in all things, and He shall make well all that is not well . . . But what the deed shall be, and how it shall be done, there is no creature beneath Christ that wot it, nor shall wit it till it is done" (*Revelations of Divine Love*, ed. G. Tyrrell, 1902, ch. xxxii, p. 79). Juliana wrote in 1373; I know of no official orthodox theologian who ventured anything like so far in speculation on the possible final restoration of all things.

Nor is it only Calvinism, or Protestant Puritanism generally, which has carried on this orthodox medieval tradition of interpreting Christ's words in their cruellest conceivable sense. Massillon, bishop of Clermont, was one of the three great Catholic preachers of seventeenth century France; it would be difficult to find any modern chapel, however small, or any modern sect, however obscure, in which the preacher would dare to commit himself to the unrelieved pessimism of Massillon's sermon on the small number of the elect. The following extracts, together with that which I give in appendix 23, give a fair idea of the whole sermon<sup>1</sup>. "Few people are saved, because the maxims most universally received in all countries, and upon which depend, in general the morals of the multitude, are incompatible with salvation. . . If thus it is, who, O my God! will be entitled to salvation? Few indeed, I am afraid, my dear hearers; at least it will not be you (unless a change takes place), nor those who resemble you; it will not be the multitude. Who shall be saved? those who work out their salvation with fear and trembling; who live in the midst of the world, but not like the world. . . Perhaps there is not in this assembly an individual who may not say of himself, 'I live like the great number; like those of my rank, age, and situation; I am lost should I die in this path.' . . . After having lived with the multitude they flatter themselves they shall be particularised at death; every one augurs favourably for himself, and chimerically thinks he shall be an exception. . . Now I ask you (and, connecting my own lot with yours and putting myself in the same disposition in which I wish

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres*, III (1810), 313, 333, 335-6, 338. I print here from the translation published at Edinburgh in 1824, with a few slight verbal corrections. This sermon "is considered his masterpiece" (*Cath. Encyc.* x, 35, art. *Massillon*).



THE SAVED, FROM THE PORTAL OF BOURGES CATHEDRAL



THE DAMNED, FROM THE PORTAL OF BOURGES CATHEDRAL

you would put yourselves, I ask it with dread), were Jesus Christ to appear in this temple, in the midst of this assembly, the most august in the whole world<sup>1</sup>, to judge us, to make the dreadful separation betwixt the goats and the sheep, do you believe that the greatest number of us would be placed at his right hand? Do you believe that the number would be at least equal? Do you believe there would even be found ten righteous, when formerly five whole cities could not furnish so many? I ask you. You know not; and I know it not. Thou alone, O my God! knowest who belong to thee... Are we in our senses, my dear hearers? Perhaps among all who listen to me, ten just would not be found; perhaps fewer still. What do I know, O my God? I dare not with a fixed eye regard the depths of thy judgements and thy justice. More than one, perhaps, would not be found amongst us all."

#### D. A friar and a magistrate

(i) *Berthold of Regensburg*, who flourished about 1250 A.D. was the greatest preacher of his day, and perhaps of the whole Middle Ages; his fellow-Franciscan Roger Bacon praises him as "one who, by his single efforts, hath more magnificent profit in preaching than almost all the other friars of St Francis or St Dominic put together" (*Opus Tertium*, R.S. 1859, p. 310). An excellent conspectus of his teaching on this and other subjects may be found in Dr Gärtner's monograph *B. v. R. Zittau*, 1890; a still fuller in E. Bernhardt, *Bruder B. v. R. Erfurt*, 1905. Most of his sermons are in F. Pfeiffer's edition (2 vols. Vienna, 1862) and a very useful collection, translated into modern German, was published by F. Göbel (Regensburg, 1873). By far the best study of Berthold was contributed at different times to the Austrian Academy by A. E. Schönbach (*Sitzungsberichte*, Phil.-Hist. Classe, 1900-7). It will suffice here to translate Bernhardt's brief summary on pp. 36-8, with references to Pfeiffer's edition.

"According to I, 33, a devil attaches himself to each human being after his birth, in order to lead him astray; they divide their labour so that one seduces to murder, another to ostentation, a third to covetousness, etc. (I, 413). They have no care for food or clothing (I, 29) but only to lay snares for man from the hour of his birth, when they seek to hinder his baptism (I, 32) to that of death, when they seek to rob him of his last hope in God's grace (II, 19). They rejoice at every soul they win, and gladly suffer in hell so long as the damned suffer also (I, 29). They care less for Jews, heathens or heretics; for these belong to them already; but even among Christians they get the greater part, even as the tribes of Israel were divided into ten and two (II, 169; cf. I, 359). They haunt sermons in their hundreds and hundreds (II, 138) and even in their thousands (I, 410); but they are neither seen nor heard. 'Ye devils, wherefore keep ye such silence?' This is their cunning; for no man who had seen the Devil as he is would ever fall into sin [II, 55: here

<sup>1</sup> The discourse was delivered in Louis XIV's presence, as one of the Lenten Sermons of 1704.

follow the words quoted in my text]. The Devil is pained when he finds men penitent; therefore, splash him over with tears of remorse, as we splash a dog with boiling water when he sneaks into the kitchen (II, 73). Devils love to do harm, even apart from temptation to sin (I, 32, 409). If they cannot get at a man with their wonted wiles, they love to seduce him into exaggeration of good works, *e.g.* fasting, so that [he] becomes weak-minded (II, 17). . . . In hell are all pagans, for these have lacked the first and most essential of virtues, faith; yea, even Cato and Seneca, although the former is singled out as a good and upright man. Such men, however, are in less torment than Nero. Of bishops, abbots and priors there is no lack in hell (II, 41). Berthold uses bold images to describe hell-torments. The sinner suffers as many deaths as the notes that dance in the sun (II, 2). If thy whole body were of red-hot iron, and the whole world, from earth to heaven, one vast fire, and thou in the midst, that is how a man is in hell, but that he is an hundredfold worse (I, 127). And when, at the Last Day, soul and body are united again, and the two together must go back to hell, then will the damned feel it as much worse as the plunge from cool dew into a mountain of fire (II, 40)<sup>1</sup>. The tortures will endure as many thousand years as there are drops in the sea, or as the number of all the hairs that have grown on man and beast since God first made Adam; and then, after all those years, the pains will only be at their beginning (I, 72). Or, more briefly, 'so long as God is in heaven' (I, 3, II, 40)."

Thus far Bernhardt's brief summary, which might be very much extended. Of special significance to the medieval mind must have been the plain reminder that, once in hell, a man is beyond the help even of all the Masses "of all the monasteries that ever were founded, even though all had been founded for the sake of his one soul" (II, 18). And, as we have seen, he does not shrink from the damnation of all non-Christians, though he insists upon a certain mitigation of their eternal tortures. He writes, "If thou hast but one mortal sin upon thee at thy death, then must thou to hell, even as Cato. He was a good and simple and upright man, yet must he dwell for evermore in hell, for the one sin that he had upon him, to wit that he had not the faith; and that is the worst of all sins" (I, 128; cf. II, 1). It was in reaction against these horrors that men invented the legend of Trajan's salvation. Dante (who puts Rhipheus also in heaven) follows the Golden Legend and early authorities in representing St Gregory as having prayed this good Emperor's soul out of hell—a presumptuous charity for which the Pope had himself to pay a heavy penalty. Trevisa stigmatizes this legend as a madman's story (trans. of Higden, R.S. v, 7). *Piers Plowman* goes a step beyond Dante in latitude of thought: it was Trajan's own goodness, rather than Gregory's intercession, which earned this miracle—"not through prayer of a pope, but for his pure truth, was that Saracen saved (B. XI, 150). And, farther still, the just God who gave Aristotle, Socrates and Solomon those intellectual gifts which have done so much good to mankind,

<sup>1</sup> Bernhardt's reference is faulty here; but I think he has reported Berthold correctly.

must treat it as our duty to pray for their souls' rest (C. xv, 195; cf. B. xii, 270). There was also a tiny grain of hope in the doctrine of the *baptismus sanguinis* for the unbaptized who have conformed themselves to Christ's passion (Aquinas, *Sum. Theol.* p. 3 a, q. lxvi, art. 11 ff.). The mystic Rulman Merswin, whose work as a Strassburg banker must have brought him into contact with many good Jews, takes great advantage of this slight concession. If a good Jew or heathen, he writes, lives honestly by the faith in which he is born, and is honestly ready to exchange that for any better faith that he can find, then God on his deathbed supplies his defect of baptism. "When God findeth such a right honest heathen or Jew, what doth God then? I will tell thee. God, who cannot leave His fresh love and his bottomless mercy, cometh to such a man's help; I will say to thee, He findeth many hidden ways that these well-willing and God-fearing men should not be lost, at whatever end of this wide world they may dwell. . . . When this good heathen or Jew is come to his last end, then cometh God to his help and enlighteneth him with Christian faith, so that he longeth with all his heart for baptism; and, though there be no present baptism there, yet if he long for it from the bottom of his heart, then will I tell thee how God doth; He goeth and baptizeth such a man for the sake of his good desire and of his bitter death. Thou shalt know that many of these good heathens and Jews are in everlasting life, and that all came thereunto in this wise" (*Das Buch v. d. Neun Felsen*, ed. C. Schmidt, 1859, p. 54; cf. C. Schmidt, *Johannes Tauler*, 1841, p. 218). The book was written about 1350. The contemporary Sacchetti puts it more tersely, but perhaps more plainly, in his 14th sermon: "Can a man, born and living as a pagan or Saracen, be saved without yet having baptism? I answer, *Yes*, if he live reasonably and justly, doing unto others as he would they should do unto him"; he goes on to quote Dante and Rhipeus. But even he does not venture to believe in the salvation of unbaptized children, "for they have not earned it either by knowledge or by will, as the just pagan hath."

(ii) *Pierre de Lancre*, a distinguished magistrate of Bordeaux, was sent as special commissioner to examine a multitude of persons accused of sorcery in the Basque districts. Side by side with penetrating and very valuable observations as to the peasant life in those districts, he shows the prevailing orthodox conviction of the omnipresence of demons and their frequent intercourse with mankind. His *Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges et Démon*s (1611) is one of the most interesting books left by any witch-finder.

P. 28. "C'est merveille que Dieu, qui a voulu faire l'homme à son image, et luy former un monde et tant de belles choses au dedans pour son seul contentement, l'ait neantmoins logé en lieu où il ne peut faire un pas, qu'il ne rencontre un ennemy qui ne cherche qu'à le perdre et le précipiter, de telle façon que mesme il n'en est pas quitte pour le coup de son premier précipice, ains il se trouve lié pour jamais aux peines éternelles. . . . Sathan est donc le seul et vray ennemy de l'homme;



mais comment de l'homme? Il est vraiment l'ennemy de Dieu, qui veut imiter en toutes choses les plus excellens ouvrages, contrepeser et balancer avec luy le gouvernement du ciel et de la terre. Tellement qu'on a quelque iuste raison d'admirer, de ce que Dieu tout puissant se soit voulu donner un ennemy si puissant luy mesme, si ce n'est qu'on die qu'il la faict pour sa plus grande gloire... De manière qu'on diroit que Dieu s'estant réservé le iour et la lumière pour faire voir ses oeuvres, il lui a laissé la nuit et les ténèbres pour faire voir les siennes, et avoir comme mi-party le gouvernement et l'empire du monde, luy donnant l'Enfer et les peines et tourments, et se gardant le Paradis et la récompence des esleus... Dieu mesme a permis à Sathan de violenter beaucoup plus les âmes saintes, les mieux réglées et celles qui semblent estre plus en sa protection que les autres."

### E. A typical monk

The following vision is not given here as being specially lurid, for that of Tundal and those easily accessible in such writers as Bede and Roger of Wendover (Bohn's series) are more ghastly. But this is more artistically picturesque than most, and far less easily accessible; it is therefore a better specimen of the monastic type.

John, Master of the Schools at the Benedictine monastery of St Lawrence at Liège, flourished about 1150 A.D. His pupil and fellow-monk Reiner tells us: "He was *scholasticus* both in learning and in office; as a boy, I often feared his ferule as sore as any man ever feared the club of Hercules. Alas! how often, when he examined or discussed what I had written, and had clutched my tablets in his crooked fingers, and scanned them with sidelong glance—how often, I say, did I then dream that I had fallen upon Virgil's one-eyed Polyphemus! Once he fell ill, and, being marvellously rapt from and above himself, he saw many memorable things which he committed to writing for edification's sake. He wrote two poems also on St Christopher the Martyr and St Mary the Egyptian; moreover, he put the martyrdom of St Stephen into hexameter verse and set a part of the Song of Songs antiphonally to music." He doubtless owed his title of *Beatus*, as men often did in those days, to the general consent of those who knew him. His *Vision* alone has survived from all these writings; it was printed by B. Pez in his *Thesaurus* (1723; vol. IV, pt iii, p. 5; cf. introd. p. xvii). I summarize his story, with frequent literal quotations, in the first person, to avoid the circumlocution involved in his own method of referring to himself all through as "the brother."

One day I fell into a fever; through want of caution in bleeding my blood was overheated and conveyed the inflammation to my brain. After four days of serious illness, the Abbot had me brought into a private cell, where watchers left me as in sleep. Yet in fact I was in a trance; I seemed to stand in some great hall painted with the Crucifixion and, underneath, Samson's life and last end amid the ruins of the

heathen temple. Then I heard a voice, reproaching me with past misdirection of energy and implying that I had thought too much of literature, too little of theology. The speaker, who held an ivory rod, "turned it towards my head and said, 'Who of all the saints hath given thee most good? Under whose shelter hast thou profited most? Who hath fostered thee and taught thee and put thee to God's service? Confess now, if thou wouldest not die of this present sickness.'" Recognizing my visitor I confessed, "St Lawrence is my patron saint; he it was who took me up in my boyhood and fostered and taught me; to him I owe thanks beyond all other saints." At the same time I crossed myself by way of precaution, lest all this should prove a diabolical illusion. The saint reassured me; whereupon I fell at his feet and implored his mercy. St Lawrence, touching me with his rod, bade me be of good comfort: "Hope, and faint not; howsoever thou mayest have lived hitherto, or whatsoever thou hast done, let us not discuss that; thy bodily life shall be prolonged for so many years. . . . But if this respite prove in vain, I shall be a terrible judge of thy negligence and contempt." I begged for the saint's formal blessing; as I rose from my knees I found myself following my patron upwards and upwards, until the sound of the abbey bell ringing to Vespers died away in the distance below us. At these heights, I lost sight of my patron; but suddenly I found him again by my side. We had come to the first sphere, which delayed our progress—the first of those hollow crystalline spheres, each set with a single planet as a gem is set in a ring, which revolve around our earth to a music of their own. "This orb seemed to me to turn with a wondrous sound; and a voice sounded saying, 'Who shall answer him that afflicteth?' For, under that orb, I saw the air darken, and as it were spectres swooping down upon me from on high. But these, hearing the sound of the sphere as it turned above them, melted away like smoke, and fluttered downwards in the devil's name. That voice or sound burned them like fire, and was as a fearful thunderbolt from heaven. Then I marvelled, and remembered how the Venerable Bede saith that no demon is permitted to rise above the orb of the moon; moreover, I remembered St Paul's words, *For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places*<sup>1</sup>. Wherefore I thought that this might chance to be the threshold beyond which no demon may rise heavenwards. But, as concerning that word which I had heard, 'Who shall answer him that afflicteth?' as I pondered what it might mean, I suddenly understood that this word was spoken against the devils, asking who may answer or withstand God, and who can reckon with Him. And the voice spake of God as the Afflicter, because the devils feel Him neither just nor equitable, but strong, as one who afflicteth them in proportion to His strength.

"Then, as I looked eastward, I saw a bench of marvellous length, whereon there sat men in monks' cowls. They sat silent and sad; their

<sup>1</sup> *In coelestibus*, Vulg. (Eph. vi, 12).

feet hung listless without support; their faces were downcast and chap-fallen. Their greatest consolation was that here, in purgatory, they lacked the sight and assaults of devils, keeping a blessed hope of their final salvation, and consoled by the dim twilight of this their house of purgation. There were some whom I knew and who saw me; but they presumed neither to move from their seats nor to speak with me. I saw also my own fleshly father cast backwards and loosed from the chains wherewith he had been bound in prison<sup>1</sup>. Here I, brother John, lingered long, and learned what I had not known concerning departed souls."

He seems not to contemplate the rare cases of a soul taken straight into heaven: there are only "two distributions of souls that go forth from the body." Those doomed to hell are in hopeless torments from the first; the rest go on to "the purgation of those souls which attain unto quiet places for their purification, either through their own merits in life, or by the commendatory prayers of the faithful, or by the intervention of their most blessed patron saints." The significance of this last category is presently heightened. "Those souls are most miserably received [in Purgatory], which deserted their patron saints, unto whom in this life they were committed by others or by their own choice, for whatever reason, as men's minds will do in their imperfect way of life. Such are either committed to demons because they have no patron to intervene, or, if this be spared them, yet they are exposed to persecution. And this is their persecution, that the devils, unable to inflict direct torment upon these wretched souls, do yet never cease to rob them of all place of rest, whether by land or by sea or by sky. These souls, placed for purgation on this earth, thirst with desire to hear God's service; and to them it is an intolerable pain when these haunting demons, whether by fear or by pursuit, confound this their wholesome desire. And here I heard an example of two monks, lest any man should deem it a light thing to have no patron saint. One of these monks, seized with sudden and unforeseen death, was hurried to God's judgement-seat. This man, though he had been guilty of lechery, yet by the merits of his great patron saint he was liberated; and, whereas his sins exacted that he should be damned, yet by his patron's intervention the Judge was appeased, and he was handed over to a happy penance and a placid purgation, unvexed by devilish assaults. The other, in his impatience of mind, preferred to the patron saint of his own monastery some other saint, serving God in that place, but thinking no sin to prefer another saint to his patron. He also died at his own time. He had been guilty of a certain waywardness of tongue, among other things; but (though he had deemed it of no account), being destitute of the defence of his own patron, he found his lot cast among those wretches whose penances

<sup>1</sup> In the absence of further biographical details, we cannot confidently interpret this allusion. On the face of it, it would seem as if John's father had been a monk who had been imprisoned for incontinence. John implies plainly that he himself had been brought up in the cloister from his childhood.

are fated to be worked out under devilish assaults; and the number of his years in purgatory was much increased<sup>1</sup>.

"When I had learned this and other things concerning the distribution of souls, I remembered my mighty guide and followed in his footsteps, and knew now that he was not alone; yet I could see none other with him; for in that place was a dazzling light, with respect whereunto my own soul was almost dark. When therefore I felt my blessed patron (for I felt him more often than I saw him) then it came into my mind to enquire of him concerning the music of the spheres, and whether I might hear that whereof I had read in scriptures. Then my great guide answered unto my thoughts, saying, 'Tarry yet awhile, brother; that which thou seekest shall soon be brought before thee.' Then, awaiting this promised harmony, I saw reared before mine eyes a vast sphere. It was golden in hue, not altogether round, but long drawn out<sup>2</sup>, the bigness whereof was as the length and breadth of a great temple, except that a temple is not round but square; and this roundness, though in that image of the celestial orb it appeared twice as long as it was broad, yet it rolled with great swiftness. Then from its lower end, which was inclined towards the eastern pole, marvellous voices began to sound as if from brazen flutes in unison with harpers harping on their harps. And, as I listened to this slowly-echoing harmony, suddenly from the upper end of the whirling orb came strains of the like nature, until one voice sounded in harmony with another, making all together such a concert as man's mind can neither think nor measure. Then, when these jubilant strains had grown to their full sound, and had begun to enchant my listening soul with ineffable raptures, suddenly that harmony was cut off, and the spherical effigy vanished silently from sight. Then said my most merciful guide (for the time was come for my return): 'Take heed unto thyself, and see that thou be not overwhelmed with too great business, unless it be for some inevitable cause. If thou canst fulfil that which is laid upon thee without any neglect of thy care for God's service, then shall it be well with thee. On thy descent through the space of air, if any ask thee where thy guide may be, then do thou answer: *St Lawrence is my guide*; and if the devils begin to fright thee with their fantasies, cry the name of Lawrence in their face.' Thus saying, he vanished away.

"When therefore I had gone a little way, moving eastwards, then I saw a band of horsemen coming to meet me. The thought came forthwith into my mind that this was St Maurice<sup>3</sup> who appeared under this form. When he drew near with his company, whom I did not count, but who might have been six or eight horsemen, then was I assured that this

<sup>1</sup> These two episodes are so important that it seems worth while to print John's actual words in appendix 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ductilis*, probably with reference to Exod. xxv, 31, Vulg.

<sup>3</sup> Maurice, according to the legend, was captain of the Theban Legion, a regiment of 6000 Christian soldiers who were first decimated and then cut down in a mass by command of the Emperor Maximian in 302 A.D. on account of their refusal to connive at idolatry.

was St Maurice indeed. . . He was clad in a purple mantle; which when I had long gazed upon, he said unto me: 'This vesture which thou seest is that which distinguished the knights<sup>1</sup> of our day from the common people; for we Roman knights were not permitted to go among other folk save in mantles of brocade or of purple.' Then it came into my heart to wonder whether the blessed Maurice knew me; but he, quietly answering my thought, made answer: 'I know that thou art a monk of St Lawrence's patronage; but I have a complaint against thee. For last year, although thou didst oftentimes visit that grange where there is a church built in my name, and though thou didst sometimes dwell there three days or more, yet didst thou never celebrate even one Mass there, or sing even once thine hours before mine altar.' I knew these things to be true; nay, myself had thought thereupon; for I had neglected them in pure weariness, since my heart was not in that place. Wherefore I besought that holy martyr to have me excused, saying: 'Lord, bear not in mind this offence of thy poor servant; for if thou wilt deign to consider what contradiction, affliction and temptation I suffered in my soul while that grange was in my care, thou wilt not harden thy heart against me for this neglect.' Then he nodded placidly upon me, saying: 'I pardon thee easily for this offence, seeing that thou hast been punished enough and to spare.' Whereupon I made answer: 'If thou art so attentive to this little chapel as to see all that is done there, I marvel wherefore thou dost not protect the poor peasants of that grange, by showing plainly unto their enemies that thou vouchsafest to care for that place.' 'Nay,' answered he, 'but to thee, and not unto their enemies, will I now publish that which thou knowest not.'

"At these words, I found myself standing by St Maurice's side in that little chapel. The saint leaned against the altar, on the side next unto the highway, holding me with his right hand against his side as though I were a sucking-child, turning my face towards the people (who seemed to be standing throughout the chapel), and bidding me turn mine eyes steadily upon them. In the midst of the chapel stood a crowd of poor men and women, praying with outstretched hands. Then one of them lifted up his face towards the altar, clapping his hands and saying: 'O St Maurice, thou mighty martyr, wherefore helpest thou me not? Wherefore dost thou not avenge me upon the robbers who have despoiled me of all my goods, and have left me naked, and who seek to take and slay me?'<sup>2</sup> At these words the saint stepped forward and, smiting me as he held me as though to command my attention, he made answer: 'Thou thyself, so far as in thee lieth, art an abominable robber; for thou keepest company with thieves, and leavest no ill undone when thou hast the power. Woe unto thee who robbest, for thou thyself shalt be robbed!' Then said another: 'Wherefore sleepest thou, and

<sup>1</sup> *Milites nostri temporis*. John evidently writes under the influence of the phraseology of his own day, in which the word *miles* had become the usual technical term for *knight*.

<sup>2</sup> These incidents of private war were common in most parts of the Continent, even when state was at peace with state.

turnest a deaf ear unto our prayers? Wherefore, mighty saint, hast thou no respect unto our misery? Behold, evil men lay waste my fields; I lose my money and the fruits of my tillage!' To whom the blessed martyr replied: 'Thou hast thy deserts, and I marvel that the earth doth not swallow thee up. For never hast thou been faithful to the cause of God, whose vassal thou art, and from whom thou hast thy livelihood; nay, thou art sacrilegious in withholding of tithes, fraudulent of thy rent, full of subterfuge in all matters of due [field]-service, and therefore so fully exposed to all enemies that all the saints scorn to help thee.' Thus, to all in turn, he objected their own misdeeds, whence they heaped up wretchedness unto themselves. All these things I heard most diligently, knowing them to be revealed for the enlightening of mine ignorance; and I marvelled to find myself thus suddenly in this chapel, where I knew every corner of the building, and to hear the martyr show me so promptly the truth. Then, even as I marvelled, suddenly I found myself again with the saint and his company in the place where first I had met them. With marvellous condescension and modesty he told me many things in answer to my thoughts, which I here omit for the avoidance of envy and unbelief, though there might be much profit therein...

"Then I slid down suddenly from those heights and descended more quickly than thought. In the air, where the devils roamed abroad, I saw corpses lying, that betrayed the miseries of man. There were the bodies of men who had lived sweetly in all delight, fed upon all luxury, cast hither and thither in their death. Some were eaten down to the breast, or with nothing left but the bare belly. Others were being torn to pieces by demons; one they would drag insultingly by the tongue, reviling him for his false witness and perjury and other crimes; another by the throat, for his superfluity of meat and drink; another by the eyes, for his lust of the eye; another by the hands, for his evil deeds. Alas! how many men and women were there whom they tore in reward for their lechery! Who could see it without wonder, or hear without amending his ways?

"I kept in memory what my blessed patron had told me concerning his name, if any should question me on my homeward way; strong in that confidence, I passed without fear. But, when I came back to the point of entering mine own body, horrible faces began to show themselves, creatures that I shuddered to behold, seeking to clutch me with crooked claws. Then I cried in their face the name of my guide, *Lawrence Martyr!* whereat they were scattered as by a bolt from heaven, and I saw them no more. Then, I know not how, suddenly I felt myself in the body; and, as one freshly awaked, I raised my head and looked round the cell, wondering where I was, whence I had come, and what I had seen."

After four days, John fell into a sudden sweat, and was relieved by a copious flow of blood from the nose: two days later, he was able to take a little food. "Then, while I grew stronger from day to day, no sooner had my forces sufficiently returned than I called a brother to

my bedside and made him write on his tablets those things which I had seen and heard, lest they should perish from my memory. Afterwards I read them again and wrote them down, adding these words to my story: Even as it was not in mine own power to fall sick, or to live, or to die, even so it was not mine to see or to tell my story, to be caught up through the air or to come down. One thing is certain: If I had not had experience of these things, I should not have feared; if I had not seen, I should never have told the tale. But I have not presumed to subtract anything which might perchance be profitable to some man; to my readers I leave it to judge; let them believe if they will; and, if they will, let them detract. But we shall all stand before Christ's judgement-seat; nor will He then weigh our merit in seeing, but the merit of our life.

*Here endeth the Vision of a certain Monk  
Concerning the State of Souls after Death."*

### 3

## MONKS AND PERSONAL SALVATION

The ideas current among modern writers who take their impressions of medieval monachism at second-hand are clearly expressed in a recent review (*Church Times*, April 1, 1921). Prof. Pollard had thus briefly characterized the monks' vocation, "to go out of the world to save one's soul"; and the reviewer branded this as "utterly and entirely untrue... a view held by controversialists of the baser sort... The Religious are gathered into convents to give the Lord the honour due unto His name; not, primarily or secondly (*sic*), to save their own souls." When challenged to produce actual *medieval* evidence against the supposition that "their first and dominant thought in choosing the cloistered life was the salvation of their own souls," the reviewer did indeed produce two very brief and inconclusive quotations from *The Imitation* and from St Benedict's *Rule*, but based himself mainly upon undocumented assertions by Abbot E. C. Butler and Fr Bede Jarrett! Even on this modern ground he is far from secure, since a greater man than either of these has pronounced definitely against him. "The monk," writes Cardinal Newman<sup>1</sup>, "proposed to himself no great or systematic work, beyond that of saving his soul. What he did more than this was the accident of the hour, spontaneous acts of piety, the sparks of mercy or beneficence, struck off in the heat, as it were, of his solemn religious toil, and done and over almost as soon as they began to be." And again: "In later times a variety of holy objects might present themselves for devotion to choose from, such as the care of the poor, or of the sick, or of the young, the redemption of the captives, or

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Sketches*, III (1873), 374, 452; cf. 377, 409, 440, 443-4. These Essays appeared first in *The Atlantis* for 1858-9 and were reprinted by Newman, with a fresh preface, in 1873.

the conversion of the barbarians; but early monachism was flight from the world, and nothing else. The troubled, jaded, weary heart, the stricken laden conscience, sought a life free from corruption in its daily worship; and it sought employments, as contrary as possible to the world's employments, employments the end of which would be in themselves, in which each day, each hour, would have its own completeness;—no elaborate undertakings, no difficult aims, no anxious ventures, no uncertainties to make the heart beat, or the temples throb, no painful combination of efforts, no extended plan of operations, no multiplicity of details, no deep calculations, no sustained machinations, no suspense, no vicissitudes, no moments of crisis or catastrophe;—nor again any subtle investigation, nor perplexities of proof, nor conflicts of rival intellects, to agitate, harass, depress, stimulate, weary, or intoxicate the soul." But, since Newman's word is not very much more authoritative, on a strictly historical question, than that of Abbot Butler or Fr Jarrett, and since the views held by these latter are put forward so confidently and so frequently as to impress the reading public, the subject must be discussed at some length here. It is only by the production of actual evidence from the Middle Ages that thinking men, who want to get at the actual facts, can begin to realize how ignorant even educated modern Religious are of their own historical past, and how naïvely they conceive the monks of far-off centuries in terms of what they see in the modern world, or read in modern books<sup>1</sup>. The passage from Fr Jarrett on which the reviewer mainly relied runs (p. 61), "Here it will be as well to protest against a quite common supposition which is *wholly and unutterably untrue*; namely, that religious life is intended as an escape from the world and its cares in order that the soul may, *thus sheltered and protected, devote itself wholly to God*. . . It is a rather bold challenge for stricter judgement at the last. . . And it is *only from this point of view* that the vows and the rules of religious life have any business to be envisaged." Among the vast mass of monastic writers, it would be quite possible to choose extracts which would go some way to justify this assertion. But the real question is, how did monks envisage their profession not at moments of abstract contemplation but at times of practical choice? and, taking them at those moments of frank self-revelation, shall we find even the best of them really agreeing with the words I have italicized above? The majority of later monks, as we shall see, were judged even by their own contemporaries

<sup>1</sup> To give a single instance: Fr Jarrett writes that poverty was "never till the days of St Francis very prominent as a religious vow" (*The Religious Life*, 1920, p. 65). But this is exaggerated, even when we emphasize his last four words. The prescription of absolute personal poverty is an integral and oft-repeated factor in St Benedict's Rule. Martène, in his commentary on the 33rd chapter of that Rule, gives a whole list of early Rules in which it is equally prominent; and Innocent III, before St Francis had been heard of, decreed that "the abdication of property, like the custody of chastity, is so integral a part of the monastic Rule that not even a Pope can grant a licence to the contrary." This decree of 1202 was embodied in Canon Law (*Decret. Greg. lib. III, tit. xxxv, c. 6*).



to lack any true sense of vocation. But how had the very greatest of them, in the earlier and purer centuries, faced that vocation in practice?

The reviewer's appeal to St Benedict and the *Imitation* will not help him much. From the latter he quotes bk I, ch. 1; yet even in this book of exceptional idealism the other side is also prominent. "If now [in the monastery] thou art not able to suffer so small a thing, how shalt thou be able to suffer an eternity of torment? If a little pain make thee impatient now, what then will hell do? Lo, thou canst not truly have two joys, to have delight here in the world, and to reign afterwards with Christ. If thou hadst lived perpetually until today, in honour and pleasures, what would all this have profited thee if thou must die at this moment? Therefore all is vanity, save to love God and to serve Him alone; for he who loveth God with all his heart feareth neither death nor torment nor judgement, seeing that perfect love bringeth secure access to God" (bk I, ch. xxiv, 6; cf. I, iii, 5, xxii, 2, xxiv, 3, 4).

And the *Imitation* is not only a very exceptional book, but also very brief, and concentrated upon the highest human aspirations. In his other works, Thomas à Kempis lays far more stress upon that theme of escape from hell which is also the theme of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. I may refer specially to the following passages: *De Disc. Claustr.* c. i, §§ 1, 6; *Dial. Novit.* introd. § 1; c. iii, nov. 2; c. vii, 2\* and nov. 2; c. viii, 2\*, 3; *Epist.* iv. In the first passage marked with an asterisk, Thomas writes to a widowed mother who resented her only son's entrance into a monastery, "Is it not safer for him to serve God in the cloister, than to lose his soul with thee in the world?" And in the second, "O how blind and foolish are they who . . . fear in this life to undergo the discipline of the holy Order [of monks], and heed not the flame of everlasting inextinguishable fire!"

With regard to St Benedict, by far the most important portion for our present purpose is the Prologue to his Rule, nearly all of which I have translated in Chap. xi. It will be seen that the aspirant is repeatedly exhorted to avoid the torments and press on towards heaven: *harden not your hearts—lest the darkness of death come upon you—who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?—not the death of a sinner, but that he should live—fleeing from the pains of hell, to attain unto everlasting life—sharing now the sufferings of Christ, in order to reign with Him*. So again, at the end of ch. 7, after St Benedict has described the long and laborious degrees of humility, only then, he adds, does the monk arrive "at that love of God which, being perfect, casteth out fear . . . no longer now through fear of hell, but for love of Christ and through good habits themselves and the delight in virtues"<sup>1</sup>. Finally, this same spirit breathes as clearly, though far more briefly, from the few lines of exhortation with which the Rule concludes (ch. 73). This is still farther emphasized by the modern commentary published by the great Con-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. St Isidore of Seville: "It is necessary that we should first be converted to God by fear, in order that the temptations of the flesh may be conquered by the fear of future punishment" (P.L. vol. 83, col. 609 a).

gregation of Monte Cassino, and confirmed by the Pope (1880). It begins thus: "Both the Holy Father Benedict in writing his Rule, and we in expounding it at proper and suitable points, have kept this single object in sight—*id unum spectavimus*—that monks, during this their mortal pilgrimage, should devote themselves to the amendment of their lives—*morum emendationi dent operam*—and should follow that holiness of life and purity and innocence of soul whereby, after the troubles of this exiled state, they may soon return in gladness to their Creator and free, so far as may be, from any pains of Purgatory. But seeing that, human infirmity preventing us, it is not always given unto us to perform that which we intend (for we all offend in many things, and even the righteous man falleth seven times daily), therefore we hold it right and pious to spend the same care upon the dead, for their expiation, as we spent upon the living that they might go forward in virtue; in order that whatsoever stains they may have contracted by turning aside from St Benedict's warnings or our own may be purged by our pious and paternal suffrages, and that they may come the sooner to the beatific vision of God." The commentary goes on for three pages in the same strain; its whole theme is the liberation of dead monks or nuns from purgatory by Masses, prayers and doles to the poor. We are very far here from that contention of certain modern apologists, that the aim of personal salvation fills neither the first nor even the second place in the monastic ideal.

We may infer the same from St Jerome, whose letters to Eustochium and Rusticus, with other similar writings, became almost as classical in monachism as St Benedict's Rule itself. For Jerome, the monk leaves the world as Lot left Sodom, as Noah took refuge in the Ark, as Rahab fled from Jericho, as Moses escaped from the Red Sea; he bears in mind that Great Day when "at the voice of the last trump the earth with her inhabitants shall fear, and thou shalt rejoice. . . Then shalt thou, boorish and poor, be exalted, and shalt laugh, saying, 'Behold my Crucified One, behold my Judge,'" etc. etc. Finally, he reinforces his exhortations by a picture of the misery of the age, and this world's imminent dissolution; immortal Rome had just fallen before the barbarian Alaric, and "when Rome perisheth, what can be saved?"<sup>1</sup>

With St Gregory, again, the dominant thought is that of escape from shipwreck into port, from the Flood into the Ark<sup>2</sup>. It may almost be said that the thought of increasing God's glory by taking the vows is non-existent; he frankly recognizes that his duty lies on the world's side, while his inclinations call him to the cloister. "I sought the haven of monastic life; and (as I vainly believed) I left the things of this world and escaped naked from the shipwreck of this life." But from this he was called to the heavier burden of work among his fellow-men: he was compelled to take first the priesthood and then, still more unwillingly, the Papacy. He could not in conscience refuse, since "of all

<sup>1</sup> P.L. vol. 22, cols. 395, 422, 424, 354, 1057-9: compare also the passage quoted by Newman (*l.c.* p. 440) in support of his own contention.

<sup>2</sup> P.L. vol. 75, col. 511; vol. 76, col. 932; vol. 77, col. 152.

sacrifices to God Almighty, the greatest is that of zeal for men's souls." But his labour for others' souls entailed sorrow for his own; he himself seemed now to be struggling at a greater distance from God; "while I am tossed and borne along by the vast waves [of this worldly sea], my straining eyes can scarce see that haven which I had left." And when, in another passage, he sets himself to describe the monk's virtues in detail, these are almost altogether subjective; the monk is holy not because he does so much for God, but because he is so changed in himself from what he was. So also St Odo of Cluny in the tenth century; to save a girl from married life and put her into a monastery is to put her soul in the way of salvation<sup>1</sup>. So, too, with St Ivo of Chartres a century later; his friend Helgod had resigned the bishopric of Soissons to become a monk at Marmoutier; "by reason of the dangers of his prelacy, which he found he could not bear with health [to his soul], he gave up his see and, fleeing to the harbour of this monastery, he escaped naked from the wreck of this world... This was the sum of his design, that he would rather be saved in a lowly place, than risk his soul in a place of dignity"; and Ivo, writing to the Pope, entirely approves this resolution<sup>2</sup>.

St Bernard, again, was an idealist of the idealists; but he, like Newman, knew human nature through and through. First and second among his collected letters come two in which he exhorts vacillating converts to perseverance. His whole stress is on their own danger to their own souls, not on that which God may be losing for lack of their service. For instance: "Thou fearest our [monastic] watchings and fastings and manual labour; yet these are small things to one who meditates on everlasting fire. The remembrance of that outer darkness taketh away a man's horror of solitude... That eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth, presented to thy spiritual eyes, will make it indifferent whether thou liest on a mat or on a featherbed," etc. etc. (I, § 12). Many such passages could be quoted from his writings; one more may suffice (*Dom. IV post Pent. Serm.* § 2). He is preaching to his fellow-monks. "Thou must go three days' journey into the desert, if thou wouldst offer a sacrifice pleasing to thy God; and for three days thou must bear with the Saviour if thou wouldst fain be fed with the miraculous loaves. The first is the day of Fear; a day that showeth and illuminateth thy darkness, the darkness of thy soul, and that setteth before thy face the horrible torments of hell, wherein is the outer darkness. This thought, as ye yourselves know, is wont to exercise the beginnings of our conversion. The second day is that of Pity [or *piety*], wherein we breathe again in the light of God's compassion. The third is the day of Reason, wherein the truth is made known, that the servant may serve his Redeemer, even as by some natural debt the creature may be subject to its Creator." St Bonaventura, again, emphasizes the "security and profit" of entering a monastery: he implies that the first

<sup>1</sup> *Vita Odonis* in M. Marrier, *Bibliotheca Cluniacensis*, 1614, col. 29; Migne, P.L. vol. 133, col. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Ep. 88, Migne, P.L. vol. 162, col. 109.

consideration is naturally "sua salus"—one's own salvation (ed. Quaracchi, II, 946 b and III, 879 b).

When we pass from the monks who are great for all time to those who were great only in their own day, the evidence becomes stronger still. The *Exordium Magnum Cisterciense*, that precious collection of early pictures, describes many conversions; in nearly all, the fear of hell is prominent, and the convert is shown as thinking first of his own salvation. Caesarius, whose collection dates from about a generation later, supplies even stronger evidence to the same effect; I deal with this in Chap. XXIII. A century later, the *Vitae Fratrum* supplies us with a similar collection of anecdotes from the earliest days of the Dominican Order; it is the most accessible of all the sources I quote, because it has been translated. I quote from this translation (*Lives of the Brethren*, J. P. Conway, 1896). Between pp. 144-61 we are told of the reasons moving 24 separate converts to enter the cloister; only in one case (pp. 144-5) is the motive not definitely that of personal salvation. So again from p. 247 onward, 24 cases are given of friars who fought their way through trials; not one emphasizes altruism apart from the personal desire of escaping hell or attaining to heaven. Tritheim in the fifteenth century is still more emphatic than Bernard in the twelfth; "if thou fear the austerities of the cloister, think of the torments of hell; if thou find the night-services burdensome, know that in hell there is neither sleep nor rest; if thou shrink from the hardness of thy couch, consider that their bed is the fire which shall never be quenched; if thou fear the spare diet of food and drink, think that they feed upon the worm that dieth not, and mourning, and woe; if thou shudder at the custody of the cloister, remember those precincts of hell, whence no man shall issue forth for ever and ever"<sup>1</sup>. Finally, the autobiography of Tritheim's contemporary, Johann Busch, shows very clearly how dominant this motive was in the conversion of one of the best monks of that century. He could never shake himself free from thoughts of hell; the solemn words *for ever and evermore* rang day and night in his brain, until he had taken refuge in the cloister<sup>2</sup>.

If the more positive ideals to which Fr Jarrett appeals had really taken the same prominence in the medieval mind, it would be hard to account for the comparative subordination of the Mass, first in early monachism, until it had acquired a definitely commercial nexus, and, again, in reformed monachism<sup>3</sup>. The Mass stood high above all other modes of "giving the Lord the honour due unto His name"; yet a whole section of *Vitaspatrum* is given to monks who avoided the priesthood (P.L. vol. 73, col. 1051). There were very few monastic Masses in St Benedict's day; their later multiplication went steadily hand in hand with money-payments, and decay of discipline and loss of real influence or respect. So, again, great monastic reformers threw the Mass into the background; Peter of Blois praises the Carthusians warmly

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Martène in his commentary on the Prologue to St Benedict's Rule.

<sup>2</sup> Translated in *Med. Garner*, p. 641.

<sup>3</sup> This will be seen in my last volume.

for this (Ep. 123); it was a distinctive feature in St Francis's original ideal<sup>1</sup>. When, again, St Benedict says (c. 43), "let nothing be preferred to the work of God" (i.e. to the prayers and services in church), he no more meant that the monk was to think more of those services than of his personal salvation, than that he was to put those services before the Three Substantials of Obedience, Chastity and Poverty. The context shows that he is here speaking of punctuality at these services, and repudiating the excuses of monks who are too busy with other occupations to come in time, or to come at all. Thus it is explained by the chapter-heading, "Concerning those who come late to service or to meals." Thus it is commented by Torquemada, "the Holy Father's teaching and instruction against those who neglect to come to service," "because it cometh oftentimes to pass that some men fail on these points." Thus, again, it is understood by Martène and the Subiaco Commentary; indeed, it is difficult to understand how anybody who has read the whole chapter can interpret it otherwise. To Ailred, the monk's sabbath-rest begins less in the active praise of God than in what may be called philosophic tranquillity: "When a man hath retired from this outward tumult to the secret closet of his own mind, and, shutting the door upon the crowds of vanities that besiege him, reviews his inward treasures... Hence ariseth suddenly a wondrous freedom from care; from this freedom, a wondrous pleasure; from this pleasure a certain jubilation, breaking forth all the more devoutly into God's praise in proportion as it seeth that God hath given whatsoever it recognizeth of good in itself" (cols. 578-9).

In short, the monk's first cry was that of John Baptist and of John Bunyan: *Flee from the wrath to come!* St Benedict, like the practical Christian that he was, recognized that a man's primary consideration in fact, if not in theory, is to save his own soul. No doubt, in order to save our soul most surely, we must love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our mind and all our strength, and our neighbour as ourself. Logically therefore, the main and ultimate object of all this may be to glorify God; but practically, it begins from our consciousness of our own existence and our own needs, which we know more directly

<sup>1</sup> It was not the study of ancient monastic records, but modern theological sentiment, which dictated the late Mgr R. H. Benson's dithyrambs on this subject in *The King's Achievement* (1905, pp. 134, 305). To his hero there, during Mass at Lewes Priory "the mystical fancy suggested itself as the hum of voices began that he was in a garden, warm and bright with grace, and that bees were about him making honey—that fragrant sweetness of which it had been said long ago that God should eat—and as the tinkle of the Elevation sounded out here and there, it seemed to him as a signal that the mysterious confection was done, and that every altar sprang into perfume from those silver vessels set with jewel and crystal." And again, when he thought of his own first Mass as a monk, "what a power would be his on that day! He would have his finger then on the huge engine of grace, and could turn it whither he would, spraying infinite force on this and that soul, on Ralph stubbornly fighting against God in London, on his mother silent and bitter at home," etc. etc.

and exactly than we can know anything else; charity begins at home, whether we take the word in the theological sense of intimate loving union with God, or in its more common workaday signification. But all hair-splitting still leaves us face to face with the fact that even the greatest saints must be dominated, at most times, by the hope of personal salvation; that with most people, even among those who strive to lead a dedicated life, this thought will come first of all and remain most prominent; and that, in proportion as a high ideal is systematized and materialized—still more, in proportion as it becomes debased by a cash nexus—the jostle for personal salvation will predominate over the abstract ideal of promoting God's glory. Spiritually-minded people, like Johann Busch, will try to compass this end by spiritual means; coarser-minded folk by coarser means, sometimes even to the lowest depths of fetishism.

## 4

## MEDIEVAL UNFAITH

Renan's *Averroës*, valuable as it is, touches only the fringe of this subject, which well deserves a volume to itself. It is worth while adding a little here to what I have already said in other places<sup>1</sup> in order to mark the extent to which unbelief had to be reckoned with in the monk's religion.

Ailred of Rievaulx finds it worth while to devote a whole chapter to "a disputation against the fool, who saith in his heart 'There is no God'" (P.L. vol. 195, col. 510). Giraldus Cambrensis, writing of a priest who disbelieved in Transubstantiation, the Incarnation, and the Immortality of the Soul, adds: "O! how many such men as this lurk hidden among us today!" (R.S. II, 285). Gower, speaking of the dishonesty of the merchants of his time, adds: "I know not why I should preach to such merchants concerning the joys of heaven or the pains of hell; for they well know that he who multiplies money in this life gets at least honour of his body. One of them said to me the other day: 'He who can get the sweetness of this life, and who lets it go, would be a fool in my opinion; for, after that, no man knoweth the truth, whither or by what ways we go.' Thus do the merchants of our day dispute and say; and thus will they commonly answer" (*Mirour de l'Omme*, vv. 25909 ff.). Meffret finds himself obliged to argue with unbelievers in his congregation: "But you would say, 'If the pains of purgatory are so grievous and bitter, wherefore then do secular folk not fear them, nor care for them, but say, 'If the priests didn't tell us there was a hell, they would never be able to get their living.''" There was always much more unbelief in countries like Sicily, S. Italy and Spain, where intercourse with Mohammedans was frequent; e.g. "il y

<sup>1</sup> Especially in *From St Francis to Dante* (see index s.v. *Infidelity*) and in the 13th of my *Medieval Studies*.

avait bien des chevaliers castillans qui ne se faisaient pas scrupule de *vivre à l'augure*, comme on disait alors [*i.e.* to follow pagan magic rather than Christian doctrine]...ou de piller et de brûler des églises." The Cid himself *vivait à l'augure* (R. Dozy, *Recherches sur l'Hist. et la Litt. de l'Espagne pendant le M.A.* Leyden, 1860, II, 109, 141). With unbelief among the medieval peasantry I shall deal more fully towards the end of my second volume.

In this connexion we must bear in mind that the greatest ecstasies of medieval faith were often mingled with doubt and distress; here is a supernatural revelation, indeed, but is it from God or from Satan? Female saints were specially tortured in this way: *e.g.* St Angela of Foligno, some of whose ecstasies plunged her into black despair; "and sometimes I dwell in the most horrible darkness of demons, wherein all hope of good seems altogether wanting; and that is a horrible darkness"<sup>1</sup>. Or, again, St Teresa in the 23rd chapter of her autobiography; where she tells us how she found consolation in a misquotation from St Paul's epistles. I have given other similar instances in my text; they might easily be multiplied if it were worth while.

## 5

## PROCESSUS BELIAL

The Benedictine editors seem doubtful whether this treatise on Ps. xv, 6 is actually by Hugh of St-Victor; but there can be no doubt that it is of his time, and there is no reason to doubt that it is of his school, the greatest mystical school of the twelfth century. I therefore give it here in preference to an equally long summary of the so-called Bartolus, which is decidedly more repugnant to modern religious ideas. The original is in P.L. vol. 177, col. 596.

"God, intending to redeem the world through a man, came into the world, and found the devil ruling over the whole world. It was all God's, for He had made it; it was all the devil's, for he now possessed it. God in the beginning had created the world, and from the beginning the devil had possessed it; therefore a struggle now began between God and the devil. God claimed to take what was His; the devil refused to be deprived of what he held in his power after it had been so long neglected [by God]. God replied that he had fraudulently taken and was violently holding that which was not his own; to which the devil retorted that God had neither gainsaid him when he took it nor ever sought it back while he held it. God claimed the power of using force, if He would, to regain His own; the devil answered that force should not be abused against justice. 'Nay,' said God; 'but it is not just for Me to

<sup>1</sup> Angelae de Fulgino Visionum et Instructionum Liber (Cologne, 1852), p. 45. Angela counted this darkness of despair as the 19th stage of her progress in religion.

let that perish which I had kindly created'; the devil answered that there was no injustice in not restoring that which had perished of its own free will. God said that in His own lovingkindness He would have mercy; the devil, that he had no mind to suffer loss through another's power. God, that it was just to receive to salvation those who repented of their sins; the devil, that there was no justice in forcing salvation upon those who persisted in sin. 'Nay,' said God; 'for I am come not to compel the unwilling but to help the willing'; to which the devil: 'I will gladly suffer the loss of the willing, so long as I may keep the unwilling.' G. 'I commit no trespass upon hell if Mine own are restored unto Me:' D. 'I am ready to give up those who are not mine, provided that mine own are not taken away.' G. 'I can repel no man from My mercy:' D. 'I cannot patiently bear the loss of all.' G. 'I am pleading that thou shouldst altogether withdraw from that which is no right of thine:' D. 'I demand that at least, in reverence for my former domination, rest be not denied unto me in some part.' G. 'When I have chosen the better part, I will grant the worse unto thee:' D. 'If I may not choose, let the partition at least be made by law.' G. 'By the privilege of My dominion, I claim the power over both:' D. 'Having no farther power, I demand nothing by law, but only by permission.' G. 'I will grant thee so much as might satisfy the hunger even of a miser:' D. 'I cannot have so much but that I would fain have more, if that were possible.' After this debate, God bade cords to be stretched for the partition; and he found that the green well-watered plots in the depth of the valleys were less in space and greater in worth; these therefore he bade place on the one side, and on the other side those dry and desert tracts on the uplands and the high mountains, broad and open to the view, great in extent and vile in worth. Then he bade the devil come, and said unto him: 'Lest perchance thou shouldst be able to accuse my violence in judging, or mine avarice in giving, whatsoever thine eye seeth, that will I give unto thee.' Then the devil, who hath respect unto all that is lofty and whose eye cannot see lowly things, lifted up his eyes and saw the lofty mountains, the nodding cliffs and rocks, and the open wilderness; and, proud that almost all [the world] had fallen unto his share, he made no account of that which God had chosen. Then God, in rebuke and mockery of his blindness, said unto him, 'The lines are fallen unto Me in goodly places' (Ps. xv, 6). Thou praisest that which thou seest, and I, that which I see. Thou art in the depths, wherefore naught is open unto thine eye but that which is lofty and prominent; I look down from above, and see the pleasantness of lowly things: for Mine inheritance is good unto me (*ibid.*)."



## 6

## DEMONOLOGY IN THE LAW COURTS

(a) Surtees Soc. vol. 88, *Northumberland Assize Rolls*, p. 343 (roll of 7 Ed. I.).

A certain unknown woman, a witch, entered John of Kerneslawe's house at eventide and assaulted the said John, so that the said John signed himself with the sign of the cross on the small of his back when men said *Benedicite*<sup>1</sup>. And the said John in self defence, as against the devil, smote that witch with a certain javelin, so that she died. And then, by the judgement of the whole clergy, she was burned. And the said John, after this deed, became raving mad. And afterwards, when he had recovered his senses, remembering the aforesaid deed, and fearing that it might imperil him, he fled into the bishopric of Durham; and he is not suspected of any felony; therefore let him return if he will, but his chattels are confiscated for his flight. The value of his chattels is £4. 5s.

(b) From *The Court Baron*, Selden Soc. 1891, pp. 62-4.

This treatise, of the latter part of the thirteenth century, was drawn up for the guidance of some lord's steward in holding his manor-courts. One point of law after another is explained by means of typical concrete examples, founded doubtless on cases actually recorded. There is evidence to connect the book with the abbot of Westminster; in any case, it concerned a lord who had some of the most extensive manorial privileges, including that of the gallows—for such is the significance of those final words: "let him have a priest."

*Steward*. Bailiff! *Bailiff*. Sir! *S*. Let the prisoners come before us. *B*. That will I sir. Lo! they are here. *S*. Bailiff! *B*. Sir! *S*. For what cause was this man taken? *B*. Sir, for a mare which he took in the field of C. in other manner than he ought. *S*. What is thy name? *Prisoner*. Sir, my name is W[illiam]. *S*. William, thou art taken and attached in this court for a mare, which is here present, which thou art said to have taken larcenously in the field of C. How wilt thou acquit thyself of this larceny and all others? *P*. Sir, if any man will sue against me for larceny or any other thing that is against the peace of the king and his crown, I am ready to defend myself by my body that I am good and lawful. *S*. W[illiam], now answer me by what device thou camest by this mare; for at least thou canst not deny that she was found with thee, and that thou did'st avow her for thine own. *P*. Sir, I disavow this mare, and never saw I her until now. *S*. Then, W[illiam], thou

<sup>1</sup> The *luminaria* of the text should probably be *lumbaria*. In any case, he left John in such a state that he made very eccentric signs of the cross when men said *Benedicite*; and the probability is that this eccentricity showed itself in some distortion of the holy gesture which would imply contempt rather than reverence for the holy word.

canst right boldly put thyself upon the good folk of this vill that never thou didst steal her. *P.* Nay, sir, for these men have their hearts big against me and hate me much because of this ill report which is surmised against me. *S.* Thinkest thou, William, that there be any who would commend his body and soul to the devils for thee or for love or for hatred of thee? Nay, verily, they are good folk and lawful, and thou canst oust from among them all those whom thou suspectest of desiring thy condemnation. But do thou what is right and have God before thine eyes and confess the truth of this thing, and the other things that thou hast done, and give not thyself wholly to the enticement of the devil, but confess the truth and thou shalt find us the more merciful. *P.* Sir, in God's name have pity of me and I will confess to thee the truth, and I will put me wholly upon thy loyalty. *S.* William, by my loyalty thou shalt have nought but justice! Say therefore what thou wilt, and conceal naught. *P.* Sir, my great poverty, and my great neediness and the enticement of the devil made me take this mare larcenously, and often have they made me do other things which I ought not to have done. *S.* God pardon thee, W[illiam]; at least thou hast confessed in this court that larcenously thou tookest this mare and hast done many other ill deeds; now name some of thy fellows, for it cannot be but that thou hadst fellowship in thy evil deeds. *P.* Of a truth, sir, never had I companion in my evil deeds save only the fiend. *S.* W[illiam], wilt thou say or confess aught else? *P.* Nay, Sir. *S.* Bailiff! *B.* Sir! *S.* Take him away, and let him have a priest.

## 7

## MONASTIC SILENCE AND LAUGHTER

(a) The intense medieval emphasis on the religious virtue of silence is foreign even to the modern Benedictine mind; it is instructive to compare Abbot Butler's apologia on this subject (pp. 288-90) with the medieval disciplinarians, or even with the brief extracts given by Martène in his *Commentary* (ch. vi). Medieval examples might easily be multiplied to fill a volume; it will be enough to give two or three here. Though *Vitaspatrum* is a pre-Benedictine and Eastern collection, yet it is so constantly taken as a model by medieval Benedictine writers that its evidence is always to the point; an idea of its attitude here may be gathered by referring to *silentium* in the index, and especially to the discourse in bk VII, ch. xxxii (P.L. vol. 73, col. 1051; cf. col. 870). To the biographer of St Odo of Cluny (d. 943) "monastic life without silence must be esteemed a thing of nought. . . for a monk's life counts for something so long as he studies to live in silence; but, when silence is gone, whatsoever the monk may think himself to be doing well or honestly, in accordance with that which the Fathers have instituted, is as nothing." And he tells two stories of model silence; one monk, set as watch over the grazing horses by night, would not even say a word to

wake the grooms when a thief came and stole a horse; two other monks, prisoners among the wild Normans, refused to speak even at the risk of their lives (P.L. vol. 133, cols. 66-8). To St Bernard, silence is "the ornament of righteousness, the mother, nurse and guardian of all virtues," "the strengthener of the soul," "the guardian of Religion" (Epp. 89, 385; *Serm. II post Oct. Ep.* § 7; cf. *Serm. de Divers.* xvii, §§ 2 ff.). Thomas à Kempis, besides his frequent references in the *Imitatio*, devotes to this subject the greater part of his treatise *De Solitudine et Silentio*. In the *Speculum Morale*, silence likens men to God, who silently watches our sins, Christ, who was dumb under torture, and the Virgin, who spoke so little (lib. III, pars i, dist. 4). It is the main theme of one of the most poetical of the Mary-legends that of the abbot of St-Gall<sup>1</sup>.

"Wide were the convent precincts, and rich in trees and grass... A flowing stream ran through the grounds, and the inmates were wont to take their pastime there at ordered times. Early one morning, a company of monks went thus for their pleasure and stood by the water's brink: there they exchanged and bartered scoff and jest and idle words. [In the midst of these vanities the monks were aware of a boat that came up the stream; and, as they heard the splash of the oars, each felt in his heart a certain fear, and cried to the strangers to know who they were.] 'We are devils,' said they, 'who bear hence a man's soul; he was abbot of St-Gall, set above all the rest; but he wandered after our will in the thicket of sins.' Then began all the monks to cry for help to the Blessed Virgin: 'Holy Mary, help us now!' and they fled from that stream lest some evil should overtake them. Then cried the devils, as they rowed on in their boat: 'Well were ye advised to cry upon that Lady; for, had ye not done thus, we should have drawn you to the bottom and drowned you. For ye are untamed monks; and here, at unseasonable times, and against the Rule of your Order, ye use idle mirth and unprofitable words, whereby ye are given to falsehood through the vanity of your hearts.' Then went the monks their ways, and withheld themselves thenceforth from such talk at such times as are held unseasonable; they gave thanks to the mother of God who had been so true and helped them in so sore a need; wherefore let us all praise that Queen."

(b) Laughter, again, was reprobated from *Vitaspatrum* onwards. Abbé J.-B. Thiers scarcely exaggerated when he wrote in 1686: "Les pères des monastères semblent avoir absolument interdit le ris aux Religieux et aux Religieuses." St Bernard echoes St John Chrysostom; Christ, (he says) is recorded to have wept for Lazarus, to have wept for Jerusalem, but never to have laughed (*In Adv. Serm.* iv, § 7). St Basil had put it almost as emphatically as Chrysostom: "Seeing that the Lord condemneth those who laugh in this life, it is very plain that the faithful hath no occasion to laugh, and especially among so great a multitude of those who dishonour God by transgressing His law and

<sup>1</sup> Printed by F. H. v. d. Hagen, *Gesammtabenteuer*, III (1850), 477, and by F. Pfeiffer, *Marienlegenden* (1846), p. 114.

die in their sins; over whom we ought to mourn and groan." St Benedict stated it more moderately in his Rule (ch. iv, §§ 54-5; vii, 10): the monk is "not to speak idle words, or such as are apt to laughter, nor to love much or uncontrolled laughter"; he must not be "easy or prompt to laugh; for it is written, 'the fool raiseth his voice in laughter.'" Medieval commentators, though they point out that this does not forbid laughter altogether, are practically unanimous in interpreting these sentences in what would be called a distinctly Puritan sense; this may be verified from the quotations collected by Martène for those two passages, and in P.L. vol. 103, col. 823 notes. Turrecremata, who is perhaps the most lenient of the commentators, quotes not only Christ's example, but His words, "Woe unto you who laugh" (*Comment.*, on ch. iv, §§ 54-5). Herolt tells us of a monk to whom a foretaste of purgatorial experience had been vouchsafed in his lifetime, and who, "when he saw any young monk laughing immoderately, or indulging in any other frivolity, was frequently wont to cry out, 'O! if thou knewest how bitter pains are due unto thee for these levities, thou wouldst perchance correct these thy frivolous ways'" (*Ex.* P. 90). Compare also the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony, who gives the same quotations from Chrysostom and Basil, "especially considering the great multitude of men who die in their sins, and for whom we ought to mourn as Christ did" (*Vita Jesu Xti*, pars. 1, c. 33 Q). We have seen how even St Francis's joy seldom admitted actual laughter; nor is there anything to differentiate the *angelica hilaritas* of Thomas à Kempis from the spiritual serenity which was quite common among seventeenth-century puritans and in the Clapham School, and most of all among the Quakers.

For other sentences against monastic laughter, see Benedict of Aniane's *Concordia Regularum*, P.L. vol. 103, col. 823, and Abbot Autpert in P.L. vol. 40, col. 1101.

## 8

## PREDESTINATION

This was a subject which exercised enquiring minds almost as much in the Middle Ages as now; Chaucer was evidently very much fascinated by it. Boethius had dealt expressly with the subject at the end of his *De Consolatione*; I have referred in appendix 1 c to Aquinas's treatment; this can scarcely be said to settle all the questions which would exercise a mind like Chaucer's, or the doubts which had been raised by the study of the Arabic philosophers. Caesarius of Heisterbach gives an instance of that cruder reasoning on this subject which meets us frequently in the later Middle Ages; the Landgraf Ludwig of Thuringia was wont to say: "If I am predestined to salvation, no sins can part me from the kingdom of Heaven; if to damnation, no good works can bring me thither"<sup>1</sup>; in a grievous illness, his doctor brought him to

<sup>1</sup> Dist. 1, c. 27; cf. 26, "the problem of God's predestination hath been an occasion of error to many men."

reason by applying the same argument: "If your death-day be come, I can do nothing for you; if, on the other hand, you are not destined to die of this sickness, you have no need of my art." Berthold of Regensburg's frequent allusions show how common this kind of reasoning was: "Some men preach openly that, whether a man do good or evil, if he be destined to salvation he shall be saved; and, however much evil he may do in all the world, if he be destined to heaven he will come thither"<sup>1</sup>. Bromyard devotes a long article to the subject (P. xi), and proves the orthodox doctrine, *inter alia*, by an appeal to Roman imperial law (*Digest. Vet. l. viii, tit. de servitutibus, l. servitudes, § si domus*). Men, he says, "are set in the scales of free-will, to choose between God and the devil, even as that woman was at Paris, whom the judge set in court between her husband and her adulterer, and bade her choose which she would; and forthwith she chose the adulterer" (P. xi, 10; A. xx, 6). And his most cogent solution, as with Caesarius before him and Dr Johnson after him, is that of practice<sup>2</sup>. "A certain woman is reported to have said, when she saw one man slay another, 'Wherefore do ye lay it to his account? the man was predestined to this death; his time was come, and there was no escape from it.' Then another smote her on the cheek; and, when she cried aloud in complaint, 'Nay,' said he, 'but thou layest this unjustly to my account; for thou wert predestined to be smitten by me at such a time and at such a place; it might not be otherwise; thou dost complain unjustly of that which God hath ordained and predestined.' He answered that fool opportunely according to her folly, but not truly; since, if she or he had spoken truth, all sins and harms whatsoever would be inevitable." Herolt (*Serm.* 75 N) gives a story of which the hero might have been Dr Johnson himself, in one of his more strenuous moods. "There was in a monastery a certain devout man to whom revelations were oftentimes vouchsafed from heaven. A certain brother at another monastery, knowing this, lay hard upon him that he should pray to God that He might deign to reveal whether he were of the number who should be saved. The other, conquered at length by his importunities, persevered in prayer until God revealed unto him that this brother was of the number of those who should be damned; wherefore, fearing to trouble him, he held his peace for some days, until at length he unwillingly disclosed it in answer to his importunities. But that brother, hearing this and knowing the scriptures, forthwith replied, 'Blessed be the Lord God; yet will I not despair; but I will double and treble the penance which I undertook in my entrance into Religion, until I shall come to life, and find grace and mercy with the Most Highest, who is so pitiful.' Within a short while afterwards, it was revealed unto that same monk that this brother was of the number of those who should be saved; and, when he had imparted this unto him, he became the

<sup>1</sup> I, 491; II, 17, 34; cf. I, 531. Herolt says practically the same, *Serm.* 93 v; this is one of the eight great snares of the devil.

<sup>2</sup> P. xi, 18; cf. Boswell, Ap. 15, 1778: "*Johnson*. All theory is against the freedom of the will, all experience for it."

more cheerful for that revelation, and stronger in his work, labouring manfully; and, going on from strength to strength, he persevered unceasingly in good."

Most interesting of all, perhaps, is the story of that young friar and Pietro Pettinaio. The latter was one of those remarkable saintly laymen who abounded specially in the earlier days of the Franciscan Order. By trade (as his name implies) he was a comb-maker; he began by giving voluntary service in hospitals, and finally gave all his goods to the poor and lodged in a cell adjoining the infirmary of the Franciscan convent at Siena. It is evident from his biography that he had great magnetic force and remarkable powers of expression, with equal power of self-control. "He feared nothing so much as the tongue, which 'defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell'; 'an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,' 'a world of iniquity': in restraining which he confessed that he had laboured sore for the space of fourteen years, before he could get complete mastery over it." On hearing the young man's arguments, "he was troubled and shuddered with great bodily commotion, and cried with the utmost vehemence. . . 'Son, thy master hath spoken ill, and thou hast followed him even worse. He hath propounded a false premiss, and thou hast drawn a most evil deduction, which I will prove unto thee by these reasons. First: if an angel from heaven were to reveal unto me that I am fore-known for damnation, I ought not on that account to neglect God's service; for, so long as I serve Him faithfully, I have him as a friend and as present with me. Therefore, if I grieve to have lost Him for eternity, yet at least I rejoice to have possessed him for a time, while this was permitted. Secondly: if by God's inscrutable judgement thou art condemned, thou must not anticipate thy damnation by thine own fault, nor suffer the torment of a wounded conscience through the contagion of sin. Thirdly: God condemneth no man guiltless; and He saw sin in thee before He decreed thee to torment. He cannot see in thee that which thou hast not committed, nor condemn thee for that which He saw not. Fourthly: there are various mansions in heaven, and various pains in hell; plagues will be meted unto thee in accordance with the measure of thine offence. Let us grant that thou art damned; even thus, if thou sin less thou shalt suffer less. Fifthly: in the world, whereunto thou wouldst fain return, it is easier to go the way to hell; in Religion, which thou art deserting, there is a more commodious path to heaven; every prudent man will follow this, and go far from the other.'"

## 9

## MONKS' SIGNS

The biographer of St Odo of Cluny, from a very different point of view, supports Giraldus's testimony as to the monks' marvellous command of finger-speech. Among the Cluniacs, he tells us, "that system had grown so perfect [before 950 A.D.] that I think, if the

monks had lost the use of their tongues, those signs might suffice to express all that they needed to say" (P.L. vol. 133, col. 57). The sign-directories often throw considerable light upon cloister life: I hope to print long extracts from the Syon list (nuns) in my volume of documents. Meanwhile the reader may be interested to read brief selections from the compilation which Abbot William of Hirschau made in about 1000 A.D. (P.L. 150, cols. 941 ff.).

Chapter VIII. *Of signs for fish.* For the sign of fish in general, imitate with your hand the commotion of a fish's tail in the water. For a sturgeon, make this general sign and then bring the top of your thumb under your chin<sup>1</sup>. For a salmon, make the general sign and then put two fingers round your eye. For the sign of a lax, as for a salmon, adding the sign of similitude<sup>2</sup>. For a lamprey, mark three or four points in your jaw with your finger. For cuttlefish, part all your fingers and wave them around. For a pike, put your right hand over your nostrils, with the tips of your fingers sticking upwards. For the fish called *carp* in the vulgar tongue, make the sign for fish and add the sign for pig. For trout, draw your finger from one eyebrow to the other. (That is also called the sign for a woman, by reason of the bands which women wear across their eyebrows.) For an eel, clench both hands, as if you were thus holding an eel tightly. For a barbel, move two fingers as a man who strokes his moustaches. [Signs follow for hake (or mullet), herring, bream, roach, and an unidentified fish.] For small fish, add to the general sign the sign for a small thing. For broiled fish, hold up your forefinger and blow upon it gently with your breath; then hold it and the next finger separate and bent like a flesh-hook. For a crab, add to the general sign for fish the sign for scissors (or pincers).

Chapter IX. *Divers kinds of food.* For cheese, clasp one hand slanting over the other, as he who presses a cheese. For flawns<sup>3</sup>, the general sign for cheese, and then imitate with three fingers the action of one who sifts [grated cheese into a dish]. For eggs, imitate one who picks open an egg-shell. For eggs fried in grease, blow upon your forefinger as aforesaid, and add the sign of lard. If you wish your egg roasted, stretch out the palms of both hands, with the left downwards, and the right held above it, moving the lower hand a little in the air. The same sign will do if you wish apples to be roasted. For milk, clasp the little finger of your left hand with all the fingers of the right, and thus draw

<sup>1</sup> This is explained in the ancient Cluniac constitutions (P.L. vol. 149, col. 703; also quoted by Martène, lib. v, c. 18, 2); the Hirschau reform was inspired by Cluny, and William's list of signs follows the Cluniac list pretty closely. "For the sign of a salmon or sturgeon, make the general sign for fish and then put your fist under your chin with the thumb upright, which is a sign of pride; for it is specially proud and rich folk who are wont to eat such fish."

<sup>2</sup> See p. 475 (Chap. XXIII).

<sup>3</sup> The flawn was a sort of cheesecake or pancake much used in monasteries. Its general name is *flato* or *flatho*; but the editor is probably right in identifying this with the *gara* of the present passage.

it out as one who draws milk from the cow. For cheesecakes, first the general signs of bread and cheese; then bend all the fingers of one hand and lay the surface of the other hand into the hollow thus made. For crisp pancakes<sup>1</sup> or fritters, grasp your hairs in your fist as though you sought thus to crisp them. For wafer-cakes, first make the general sign of bread and then imitate with two fingers those minute involutions which are made in them on the side where they are puckered up and almost round<sup>2</sup>. For bread fried in a pan, blow as before upon your finger and add the sign of lard. For pottage made with pot-herbs, with the right forefinger imitate at the top of the left fist the action of one cutting those herbs. For the sign of *sorbiciuncula*, that is, a dish made of herbs and kail, turn your right forefinger round and round within your outspread left palm, for that the stuff is thus stirred round the pot. For millet, do as above, but with this addition, that your thumb must project a little at the top of your little finger. For the sign of eating, join your two top fingers and put them once to your mouth, the rest being clenched into a fist. For flesh-food, with two fingers of your right hand touch the skin of the back of your left hand, and add the sign for eating. For lard, extend your left hand and stroke the palm with three middle fingers of the right, as one who anoints. For natural oil such as is made from walnuts, make first the sign for nut and then for lard. For honey, let your tongue just appear, and put your fingers to it as though you would lick them.

Chapter XXIII. *The signs of various things.* For all men, grasp all your hair on your forehead. For speech, hold your right hand to your mouth and move it thus; this is also the sign for reading. For hearing, hold your forefinger to your ear. For not knowing<sup>3</sup>, touch your lips with your upright forefinger. For forgetting, transfer your forefinger from your right ear to your left. For lying, put your forefinger on your lips and draw it along. For kissing, lay your forefinger on your lips. For the sign of a custom that has been left, or of any other thing forbidden or obsolete, draw down your right forefinger before the end of your left, as if to imitate one who cuts off with a knife. . . For the sign of good, whatsoever you would call good or fair, lay your thumb upon one jaw and the next two fingers upon the other, and bring all blandly and coaxingly to the point of your chin. For evil, put your outspread fingers to your face and imitate a bird's talons tearing anything and drawing it to himself. . . For a sign of speed, stretch out your right hand upon your left in the manner of a saw, and move it quickly as one who works a saw. For slowness, draw your hand slowly over your belly from the navel downwards. For anger, scratch with four fingers as one who itches. For a sign of delinquency, lay the fingers of your right hand

<sup>1</sup> The modern French *crêpe*.

<sup>2</sup> The original may give a more vivid idea of the care devoted to these descriptions, and of ordinary monastic colloquial Latin: "generali signo prae misso panis, simula cum duobus digitis illas minutas involutiones, quae in eis sunt factae ex ea parte, qua sunt complicatae et quasi rotundae."

<sup>3</sup> So in text, *nesciendi*; should it be *tacendi*, silence?



evenly together and beat your breast as though under compunction of penitence, after which, touch your own breast with your forefinger as one accusing himself. If however you will accuse another, beat your own breast and then turn the aforesaid forefinger upon him, as one showing his fault. To sign that anything has been already done, bend your right a little and hold it to your breast, turning the palm upwards, and thus straighten your hand rapidly upwards. For the sign of doing a thing willingly, seize in two fingers the flesh that hangs beneath your chin. For the sign of similitude, draw the back of your right hand down your right jaw, and then the palm similarly down the left jaw. . .

Chapter xiv, *The signs for different liquors*, goes to confirm Giraldus's criticism as to the multiplicity of liquors at Canterbury: it must be remembered, however, that both Hirschau and Canterbury were very great abbeys. The liquors here specified are water, holy-water, beer, mead, wine, piment, claree, "the drink made of honey and absinth," mustard, vinegar, red wine, white wine.

# IO

## CONVERSION AD SUCCURRENDUM

The fetishism of the cowl, touched upon in my text, might be illustrated by innumerable examples. We need scarcely wonder that St Odo of Cluny, in the tenth century, should expatiate on the difficulty of admitting a monk to heaven who had died, "though with a pure mind," in any other garb than that of St Benedict (P.L. vol. 133, col. 76; cf. 77). Again, we may find it natural that certain monasteries, proud of their standing, should boast of their membership as an almost certain passport to heaven; a legend of St-Benoît-sur-Loire promised eternal rest to all souls that passed from those walls to God's judgement-seat (*ibid.* col. 82). We might feel inclined to discount those satirists who complained that Religious in general vaunted the mechanically-saving graces of the cowl; but we get the same complaint, as late as Chaucer's day, from the serious writer who composed the second version of *The Lay Folks' Catechism*<sup>1</sup>. The earnestness with which the writer labours this point testifies to the prevalence of the belief which he combats. He writes (p. 82, l. 1221): "Ne worship not men for their fair clothes, nor for their quaint shapes that some men use, and say the clothes make them holy. And furthermore they make some men believe that whosoever dies in their habit of their Order, that he shall never go to hell. And some men think that this is a full parolous heresy, to make men to trow in false things that may not help them to their salvation. For then

<sup>1</sup> E.E.T.S. 1901. The original version was written by a monk at the bidding of Abp Thoresby of York, in 1357. The unknown person who rewrote and added to it shows certain Lollard tendencies, but even closer affinities with the authors of *Piers Plowman* and *Dives and Pauper*, who were not Lollards.

might a man sin however him list, and live so in deadly sin till his ending day, and never forethink his sin, nor make satisfaction of goods that he hath stolen of other men's, but cast on such a cope and die therein, and then his sins shall be forgiven him as from the pain of hell. But this learning is against righteousness, sithen righteous God teaches the contrary. For God and all his saints and our belief teaches us that whosoever breaketh God's commandments wilfully and liveth in pride and in lechery, and steal[eth] his neighbour's goods; and hath no repentance for these sins in his last end, nor makes no satisfaction, if he may, of the stolen goods, neither in deed, nor in will, nor in thought, that he must verily go to hell, ever without end, though he died in all the habits and all the vestments in Christendom; yea, though he had upon him in his death the clothes that Christ wore here in earth in His manhood, that by reason was never worldly cloth so holy."

In a society where such beliefs were not uncommon—and especially in the earlier centuries, when the general conscience was not yet aroused against the perilous implications of those beliefs—it was natural that rich men should seek the monastic habit in their last hours, and that admissions *ad succurrendum* should become very frequent. The practice is fully described by Mabillon, in the preface to his AA.SS.O.S.B. saec. IV, pars II, §§ 191 ff. There is a very interesting defence of it in a treatise printed by Martène from a twelfth or thirteenth century MS. (*De Antiq. Eccl. Rit.* II, 1763, p. 172).

Mabillon remarks on the common prevalence of this custom: "besides the examples which I have given in my preface to *Saec.* I, innumerable other examples of the kind may be found in old authors." He quotes from Odo of Canterbury's sermon on St Benedict: "all peoples, and nations, tribes and tongues run to him for the sake of receiving his benediction; so that even the mockers who, in their lifetime, backbite this Religion, when they come to death, then they feel themselves not secure without this religious habit of the cowl, if only *ad succurrendum*." He farther points out that, as it was always possible for the sick man to recover, difficulties arose as to the binding nature of the vows thus implicitly taken by the act of assuming the monastic habit. St Peter Damian composed a treatise against "a certain bishop who, as he heard, was spreading the opinion abroad that those who had sought the monastic habit in their last sickness were free, if they recovered, to return to secular life." An amusing story of this kind is recorded by a thirteenth century author (T. Wright, *Latin Stories*, p. 59). "I have heard of another woman who, hating her husband, made him drunken as it is told of Lot's daughter; then, sending for the monks, she began to weep and to say, 'Lo! my husband is almost at his last gasp; and he besought me to give him leave to take the cowl.' So the monks set the man upon a cart, and clothed him in a monk's habit, and carried him to their monastery. In the morning the man had slept off his wine, and woke to find himself dressed as a Religious, with monks all around him in the infirmary; wherefore he was sad and downcast. And at last, for very shame and confusion, he would not go home,

because all men would call him an apostate"<sup>1</sup>. That this is no mere random shaft of satire, is proved by the frequent allusions to changes of mind among those who thus took the vows on their sick bed; Ordericus Vitalis, for instance, records two instances of such repentance in two consecutive columns of his chronicle (P.L. vol. 188, cols. 246-7). A priest named Ansered, having taken the habit in grievous sickness, recovered and returned to his vomit, taking two concubines in succession; the second had another clerical lover who killed Ansered with an axe and sewed his body up in a sack. Another priest, named Adelard, took the habit once during illness, returned to the world on his recovery, and took it again fifteen years later, three weeks before his death. And Giraldus Cambrensis generalizes on this subject; according to him, this tardy devotion to a monastery was a standing temptation to concubinary priests, among whom "we see certain wretches, not leavers but lovers of the world—*mundi non desertores sed dilectores*—giving themselves up to Religion, when the gate of death yawns already at their feet, and they can no longer stand at divine service nor read nor sing—nay, can scarce even move their lips to pray and mumble over the psalms in a corner [of the monastery]. These men do not desert the world; rather, they themselves are deserted by the world" (R.S. II, 199).

We may end with four characteristic specimens of the very numerous documents of this kind in monastic chartularies. The first is from the Cluniac priory of Domène in Dauphiné:

(1) "Know all men, both present and to come, that I, Ysimo, give unto God and to the holy apostles Peter and Paul at the monastery of Domène the half of that holding in the village of Brignoud whereupon Drogo the priest and Widger the husbandman dwell, with all the appurtenances thereof. This gift I make for the souls of my uncles, to whom this honour belongeth, and at their bidding; moreover, I give it for mine own soul and myself and all my kinsfolk, that the Lord Almighty may purge our sins and grant us His grace. The names of mine uncles at whose bidding I do this are Peter and Herbert; and I gave this gift into the hands of the lord prior Hugh, from whom I received fifty *sols*, in the presence of Andrew the deacon, son of Andulf, and Atenulf of Domène, who warranted this matter, to defend it against all men.

"After this there arose a certain knight named Morard, who was brother to the aforesaid lords [Peter and Herbert,] wishing to put in a claim against this gift. But, under constraint of justice, he quitted his claim and approved the gift, giving also that part of the holding aforesaid which was in his own possession, to God and His holy apostles Peter and Paul at the said monastery; on condition that, if he wished to take the monastic habit, we should receive him in virtue of this gift; if however he came not unto our habit, and yet ended his life in this

<sup>1</sup> I have taken the liberty of making two alterations which the sense seems to require, *noluit* for *uoluit* and *quia* for *quare*. Wright was often a careless transcriber.

diocese, we should receive him to burial, if there were no reason in law against it; and, if justice did contradict, nevertheless the body of his donation should not be taken away from the monastery aforesaid. [Names of witnesses.] Afterwards, however, the said Morard repented and would have withdrawn from this deed of approval or donation which he had executed. Wherefore the said lord Hugh our prior, and the said Morard went to the court of the bishop of Grenoble; where Morard was condemned, so that he again approved and corroborated, of his own free will, that which he had done before; for which he received from the said prior eleven *sols* and four bushels of oats. [Witnesses' names.] But when the said Morard drew unto his last end, he devoutly sought the monastic habit as aforesaid, on the same terms which had been promised in the days of his health; and, by God's grace, he faithfully earned that which he vehemently desired. For we, seeing his death imminent, willingly fulfilled our promise through the bidding of his chaplain Peter, and Peter canon of St Martin's. And this we did with the approval of his wife Lebreliia, his daughter Rostagna, and her husband Conon, who all perfectly approved and corroborated the gift which the said Morard had made unto us"<sup>1</sup>.

(2) The next is from Molesme in Burgundy, between 1096 and 1148 (*Cartulaire de Molesme*, II, 101):

"Be it known to all the faithful in Christ that I Gerbert, chaplain of Commercy, have joined myself unto the faithful society of the abbey of Molesme, and have made it heir to all my possessions, in the hope of an everlasting recompense and on the conditions here following. Pricked by the memory of my sins, I have come unto Molesme; before the assembled brethren I have given myself and all my goods into the abbot's hands, on the terms that, if I chance to end my life in my priestly garb, then the one half of my movable possessions be brought to Molesme, and the other half shall be given to my brethren who dwell at Commercy. But if ever, by God's inspiration, I shall wish to take the monastic habit, then the monks shall receive me into their company, and all my movables shall be brought with me to the abbey. And, so long as I wish to eat at the table or court of the lords of the castle, so long shall I keep my churches in mine own hands; but when their court or table shall please me no longer, and I shall choose rather to join myself unto the table or refectory of the monks, then will I give the fruits of my churches and the tribute-bread [from my parishioners] into the common cellar of the brethren [in return] for mine own sustenance, and keep the money myself for my clothing or other necessities. And let this be known also, that the brethren, with the approval of the Chapter, have granted unto me for life their share in my church, on condition that I pay 12*d.* yearly in recognition, on the feast of St John Baptist."

<sup>1</sup> *Cartulare de Domina*, 1859, p. 133, No. 156; for other similar deeds see Nos. 17, 213, 234, 239. There were three priors named Hugh; the latest was elected about 1100; this is probably the first, elected about 1058.

(3) The third is also from Molesme, 1075-1100 (*ibid.* II, 125).

"Be it known to all faithful sons of Holy Church, both present and future, that a certain knight named Roger de Louesme hath given unto God and St Mary of Molesme all his inheritance of Louesme and all appertaining thereunto in all places, whether of lands or of bondmen and bondwomen or of woods and meadows. And the said Roger, when he made this gift, had an only daughter, whom he placed under the care of St Mary and the monks, to whom in his lifetime he demised Lambert's farm and the farm by Alery's well, on condition that at her death they should come into the possession of St Mary's abbey; and, upon this gift, the knight aforesaid presented a lady named Hersenna to be clothed [as a nun]. This deed was drawn up at Louesme in presence of the lord abbot Robert and in the days of prior Walter, on condition that, if Sir Roger should choose to join our Order, we should receive him without money—*gratis*—by reason of this his benefaction. And, so long as he shall remain in the secular habit and yet shall choose to dwell within St Mary's precincts, he shall have his daily livelihood from the common table of the brethren." [One of the witnesses to this deed is a Tescelin, possibly St Bernard's father.]

(4) The last is of a slightly different character, but typical of the same spirit. It is in the Ramsey Chartulary (R.S. I, 257) and dates from about 1150:

"Be it known to all sons of Mother Church that Robert de Broy, at the point of death, understanding that he had sinned against St Benedict and the abbey of Ramsey, restored unto the said abbey the manor of Crawley, which he had violently invaded and cruelly occupied against church law; sending the hairs of his own head, by the hands of his son Walter, in token that he restored this manor to the abbey free and quit from all claim of his heirs, and besought pardon for his rash deed. And this son Walter aforesaid, bearing the said hair and laying it upon the altar, and beseeching pardon for his dying father, did at that very place and time quit-claim the said land for his own part, and abjured it in the presence of the abbot and the brethren..."

Two other very interesting documents of this kind are printed by D. Royce in the *Landbok of Winchcombe*, I, 210, 213.

This *ad succurrendum* system was so popular and so lucrative that it was allowed to override even the most sacred of earlier safeguards for monastic discipline. Hugh, abbot of Cluny, issued in 1200 a series of reformatory statutes for the whole Cluniac Order. His preamble complains bitterly of general decay: "'The finest colour of the gold is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street'; for the very prelates, who are set for an example, walk in worldly ways, and their subjects have turned to dissoluteness"—*subditis versis in dissolutionem*. His ninth statute runs: "It is plain to all men how great ruin of souls and destruction of monasteries hath come from the neighbourhood and company of women. Wherefore we decree that no woman whatsoever be received at any monastery as nun or

lay-sister or corrodian, except *ad succurrendum*. In the monasteries where they have already been received, let them be removed from the table and from all companionship or intercourse with the monks" (*Bib. Clun.* cols. 1457 b and 1460 b).

## II

## AQUINAS ON THE HOST

The fact that mice would eat neglected Hosts was already a serious difficulty to the medieval theologian; but he was far more embarrassed by its decaying like any other bread. Yet the fact itself was only too painfully evident: here, for instance, is the evidence of an orthodox priest who published a treatise in honour of the quatercentenary of the Miraculous Hosts of Ste-Gudule at Brussels: "Le 10 juillet 1771, le prêtre Navez visite ces reliques: Elles sont rangées en triangle, dit-il; celle de la base, qui était à ma gauche lorsque je regardais le Saint-Sacrement en face, est entièrement consumée. La poussière qui en reste forme un petit monceau au pied du cercle où elle a été enchâssée. Une partie de cette poussière s'est jetée sur le cercle où est enchâssée la seconde, qui forme l'autre angle de la base. Sa surface est endommagée, quoiqu'elle se soit mieux conservée que les deux autres. Quand on en voit le revers, on y distingue clairement des marques de dépérissement. Celle qui forme le sommet de l'angle est percée en différents endroits et transparente. On ne peut pas distinguer si les trous qui y sont, sont l'effet des coups de poignard ou de couteau, ou des marques de dépérissement. La poussière de celle qui est consumée, aussi bien que de celles qui existent encore en partie, est de couleur éteinte et jaunâtre ou blafarde" (*Jub. Faux Miracle*, p. 30). The incorruptibility of certain specially miraculous Hosts might be maintained and believed; but the general corruptibility of the bread and wine changed into the Body and Blood of Christ was only too evident. Aquinas goes into the subject with his usual thoroughness and philosophical power; incidentally, it is very interesting to read his confutation of contemporaries who anticipated, however vaguely, the modern doctrine of bacilli. I give the passage in the words of his modern official translators, only adding one or two small alterations in the footnotes<sup>1</sup>.

"Objection 1. It seems that nothing can be generated from the sacramental species: because, whatever is generated, is generated out of some matter: for nothing is generated out of nothing, although by creation something is made out of nothing. But there is no matter underlying the sacramental species except that of Christ's body, and that body is incorruptible. Therefore it seems that nothing can be generated from the sacramental species. . . The senses are witness that

<sup>1</sup> *The Summa Theologiae of St T. A.*, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1914), III, iii, 316. The original is in pars III, q. lxxvii, art. 5.

something is generated out of the sacramental species, either ashes, if they be burnt, worms if they putrefy, or dust if they be crushed.

"I answer that, Since the corruption of one thing is the generation of another (*De Gener.* 1), something must be generated necessarily from the sacramental species if they be<sup>1</sup> corrupted, as stated above (art. 4); for they are not corrupted in such a way that they disappear<sup>2</sup> altogether, as if reduced to nothing; on the contrary something sensible manifestly succeeds to them.

"Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how anything can be generated from them. For it is quite evident that nothing is generated out of the body and blood of Christ which are truly there, because these are incorruptible. But if the substance or even the matter of the bread and<sup>3</sup> wine were to remain in this sacrament, then, as some have maintained it would be easy to account for this sensible object which succeeds to them. But that supposition is false, as was stated above (q. lxxxv, arts. 2, 4, 8).

"Hence it is that others have said that the things generated have not sprung from the sacramental species, but from the surrounding atmosphere. But this can be shown in many ways to be impossible. In the first place, because when a thing is generated from another, the latter at first appears changed and corrupted; whereas no alteration or corruption appeared previously in the adjacent atmosphere; hence the worms and ashes are not generated therefrom—Secondly because the nature of the atmosphere is not such as to permit of such things being generated by such alterations—Thirdly, because it is possible for many consecrated hosts to be burnt or putrefied<sup>4</sup>; nor would it be possible for an earthen body, large enough, to be generated from the atmosphere, unless a great and, in fact, exceedingly sensible condensation of the atmosphere took place—Fourthly, because the same thing can happen to the solid bodies surrounding them, such as iron or stone, which remain entire after the generation of the aforesaid things. Hence this opinion cannot stand, because it is opposed to what is manifest to our senses.

"And therefore others have said that the substance of the bread and wine returns during the corruption of the species, and so from the returning substance of the bread and wine, ashes or worms or something of the kind are generated.—But this explanation seems an impossible one. First of all, because if the substance of the bread and wine be converted into the body and blood of Christ, as was shown above (q. lxxv, arts. 2, 4), the substance of the bread and wine cannot return, except the body and blood of Christ be again changed back into the substance of bread and wine, which is impossible: even as if air be turned into fire, the air cannot return without the fire being again changed into air. But if the substance of bread and wine be annihilated, it cannot return again, because what lapses into nothing does not return numerically the same. Unless perchance it be said that the said sub-

<sup>1</sup> Rather, "when they are."

<sup>2</sup> No, "perish"—*disperireant*.

<sup>3</sup> The Latin has "or."

<sup>4</sup> "in magna quantitate hostias consecratas comburi vel putrefieri."

stance returns, because God creates anew another new substance to replace the first.—Secondly, this seems to be impossible, because no time can be assigned when the substance of the bread returns. For, from what was said above (art. 4; q. lxxvi, art. 6 ad 3), it is evident that while the species of the bread and wine remain, there remain also the body and blood of Christ, which are not present together with the substance of the bread and wine in this sacrament, according to what was stated above (q. lxxv, art. 2). Hence the substance of the bread and wine cannot return while the sacramental species remain; nor, again, when these species pass away, because then the substance of the bread and wine would be without their proper accidents, which is impossible.—Unless perchance it be said that in the last instant of the corruption of the species there returns (not, indeed, the substance of bread and wine, because it is in that very instant that they have the being of the substance generated from the species, but) the matter of bread and wine; which matter, properly speaking, would be more correctly described as created anew, than as returning. And in this sense the aforesaid position might be held.

“However, since it does not seem reasonable to say that anything takes place miraculously in this sacrament, except in virtue of the consecration itself, which does not imply either creation or return of matter, it seems better to say that in the actual consecration it is miraculously bestowed on the dimensive quantity of the bread and wine to be the subject of subsequent forms. Now this is proper to matter; and therefore as a consequence everything which goes with matter is bestowed on dimensive<sup>1</sup> quantity; and therefore everything which could be generated from the matter of bread or wine, if it were present, can be generated from the aforesaid dimensive quantity of the bread or wine, not, indeed by a new miracle, but by virtue of the miracle which has already taken place.”

It is scarcely possible to suppose that the ordinary medieval churchman could follow this reassuring philosophy with any but the most passive intelligence. For him, there were tales of miraculous interpositions of which the following is typical (*MGH. Scriptt.* xi, 489 a). St Anno, archbishop of Cologne, was celebrating Mass one day at St Michael's altar in the conventual church of Siegburg. “All the sacramental rite had been consummated except the breaking of bread. Part was put into the chalice; the rest was held with all reverence between Anno's fingers; whereupon he gazed from the first with eyes full of tears, protesting himself unworthy to receive that which no saint had ever presumed to take without fear. Tears flowed upon tears; his sighs grew, his groans increased; he pondered nothing in his heart save those words only: *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof*<sup>2</sup>. Yet these were no new pricks of compunction; nay, that was his daily custom when he stood to offer sacrifice. Meanwhile, as his prayer was long drawn out, a devil's shape (to wit a filthy fly,

<sup>1</sup> Latin, “on the aforesaid dimensive.”

<sup>2</sup> The celebrant's words before communicating.



sickening even to the sight) swooped down upon the Lord's Body, tore away a particle in his jaws, and flew off with it, to Anno's bitter grief. The colour of his face was changed; it expressed the similitude of death; he shuddered at the crime of that foul beast, and, fearing no less for himself, he deemed that this had befallen for the increase of his own sins. But his utter grief was soon turned into triumphant joy; and Satan was confounded to the uttermost by that wherein he had thought to assault the Faith, through the ordinance of the merciful Saviour, in order that, the more ignoble was this creature which had brought such grief to the holy man, the more glorious might be the miracle whereby he should triumph over it, to the showing-forth of his merits. For the venerable archbishop, troubled in this anguish beyond all power of words to express, fixed at length his heart and his eyes upon God, betraying the event by no sign to any of the bystanders, but beseeching help most instantly from the Almighty, not by any movement of the lips but with contrition of soul and with humble tears. In brief, that fiend of all impurity, as though by some violent compulsion, came back with headlong flight, betraying in part by his hissing murmur the force that he suffered, and laying down again upon the paten that fragment which his abominable theft had abstracted. Then, rising as though to fly away, it fell dead upon the altar beside the saint, and thus paid a worthy penalty for that great crime. . . Then Anno, turning to the clerk who stood nearest to him, made a sign that the fly should be burned, while he himself, taking the Holy Communion with great security and joy in the Holy Ghost, finished his service in due course." The story was repeated well down into the seventeenth century.

Giraldus Cambrensis shows us an equally serious difficulty in reconciling transubstantiation with the evidence of the senses. Anybody who has looked closely into monastic or parish accounts must be struck by the large amount of wine consumed in the Eucharist, though at the enormous majority of celebrations it was the priest alone who took the cup; it is evident that the celebrant took a very substantial draught in the course of his duties; and Giraldus is at pains to explain how the divine element could produce such very human effects (R.S. II, 54): "If," he argues, "a man take a large quantity of the consecrated wine and seem perchance to be exhilarated thereby, this befalleth from the savour and smell of the wine, since the substance thereof hath been changed [into Christ's blood], and the accidents alone remain." It must have been as difficult for the thoughtful layman to follow this argument as that by which Aquinas explained the corruption of the wafer.

## 12

### THE HOST AND THE MASS IN WITCHCRAFT

It will be convenient to begin with an author of later date who briefly summarizes the whole subject. Paul Grillandus was a Neapolitan jurisconsult and theologian who wrote upon sorcery at the end of the

sixteenth century. He says (*de Sortilegiis*, q. iii, §§ 16-24; p. 27 of the Frankfort edition of 1592): "Now, in these love-philtres there is generally —*ut plurimum*—some admixture of Church sacraments, as of the consecrated Host (as is mentioned in the gloss on c. *accusatus*, § *sane de haeret.* l. 6), or of the Host unconsecrated, yet written round with notes and letters of blood, over which they cause one or two or three Masses to be sung, or even five or more; after which celebrations they give the Host, not unbroken but reduced to powder, with all subtilty to the person whom they wish to charm. . . Two or three times in fact I have had sorcerers who, devoting themselves to this sortilege or witchcraft, had mingled the Host therewith; as for instance one cleric of a religious Order, who was wont to take even the most sacred Host, part whereof was consumed by this villain himself who wished to be loved, saying meanwhile certain most foul and abominable words, which may not well be repeated here; the rest of the Host he had sent to the woman herself, not in the form of a Host, but broken small and powdered, that she might take it with her meat or drink. Again I had another who had taken an unconsecrated Host, and then had drawn blood from his ring-finger, wherewith he had written all round the Host certain words of the foulest kind. Then he had laid the Host itself upon the altar, (that is, upon the bare consecrated stone, but hidden under the altar-cloth) and had sometimes caused Masses to be sung over it by a certain priest whose conscience was not too square—a *quodam sacerdote rotundae conscientiae*—with the superaddition of certain prayers apt to his purpose. Then he had taken the Host itself (yet it had not been expressly consecrated), part whereof he had consumed while he sent the other to the person whom he wished to charm, reduced to powder as above. Each of the parties asserted that, having taken the Host, they would be bound together by an indissoluble bond of love; yet I myself neither saw nor perceived any apparent effect therefrom. Moreover, it is only two years ago that I heard of a similar event at Rome in the case of a shameless woman in whose coffers were found two Hosts, both written over with letters of blood, which (as she said) she kept to pass on to another woman, at the instance of a man who desired her love. Again, it is not a year since two shameless women at Rome (whom I myself saw, and of whom I heard from the most excellent and reverend Lord Lieutenant of the reverend Lord the Papal Vicar, who had them in custody and had examined them)—these women, I say, had taken the holy baptismal oil, wherewith they had anointed their lips, saying at the same time, 'Faith, I do renounce thee!' and, with lips thus anointed, had kissed certain men to the intent to get their love, as they themselves asserted; yet at last the whole experiment had failed, and I saw them pay the penalty which their crimes had merited. . . For, even as the true priest doth sacrifice the true Host, which is offered devoutly to God our Creator, even so are these their reprobate sacrifices offered up by those wizards and sorcerers in imitation and violation of divine worship; and, when they have made these oblations and offered their prayers, the demon doth at once make them

consecrated, or rather execrated." Grillandus, at a later point, discusses what is the proper punishment for priests thus celebrating over non-consecrated Hosts for magic purposes (q. xi, § 19; xiv, § 1) or mingling wicked and foul prayers with the church services for an evil end (q. xvii, §§ 1, 3). The concrete example which he gives (q. xvii, § 2) is not calculated to exalt our opinion of monastic discipline. Baissac (p. 464) quotes a French case from the year 1460; a priest, following a witch's advice, baptized a toad, fed it with a consecrated Host and allowed the witch to use it for the destruction of his personal enemy.

Martène gives other instances of the use of the Eucharist as a charm (*De Ant. Rit.* I, 1763, 253-4; II, 367-8). The Host was used as a cataplasm for the eyes, with St Augustine's approval; St Bernard applied it to the head of a demoniac; it was buried with the holy dead; it was brought out to extinguish conflagrations, until this was forbidden by the Council of Seligenstadt. The signatures to Church Councils, for the sake of greater solemnity, were sometimes made with a pen "dipped in the very blood of our Saviour," i.e. the consecrated Mass-wine. A still longer list of similar magic uses is given by Abbé J.-B. Thiers in his *Traité des Superstitions* (4th ed. 1777, II, 216 ff., 341 ff.).

All this that Grillandus, Martène and Thiers describe was very common in the Middle Ages. The story of the woman who put the Host into her beehive appears as early as St Bernard's contemporary, Peter the Venerable. Giraldus Cambrensis, at the end of the twelfth century, warns priests especially against letting the Host get into the hands of "magicians" (*Gem. Ecc.* p. 32). A few years before the stories of Host-magic which we get from Caesarius and Thomas Cantimpratanus, Jacques de Vitry tells us how a woman kept the wafer in her mouth, intending to bring it out of church and use it for witchcraft; but "it turned into flesh and clave unto her palate, so that she could not speak" (p. 113). A few years later, again, Berthold of Regensburg is eloquent on this subject. As in many other cases, he assumes that such a sinner is there in his congregation. "They who do witchcraft with God's Body, that is the greatest of all sins that ever the world committed. Thou wert damned, if thou hadst but bewitched a man with a crab-apple or with a toad; what then shall befall thee, thinkest thou, if thou dost witchcraft with the Lord of all angels and of all the world, who is true God and true man, and was born, for all our comfort and salvation, of our Lady St Mary, the Holy Virgin? Alas! that ever thou wert baptized! for thou art wondrous bold in stark wickedness. For, to the devil, thou art one of the dearest princes that he hath ever begotten, and thou art next to him at the bottom of hell" (I, 206; cf. 72, 205, 355, where this and the selling of oneself to the devil are named as the two unforgivable sins; 454, where women are named as the chief offenders, and Berthold wonders that the earth does not swallow such wretches alive; 547, where he explains that some use it to compass other folks' death; so also II, 147; of all murders, this is the basest; again, in a Latin sermon quoted by Schönbach, *Gesch. d. Altd. Predigt.* II, 26). In II, 70-1, Berthold again assumes that the offender is a woman; he connects it with a host of other

similar witchcrafts, and with pagan beliefs. "And some believe in holy wells, or holy trees, or holy graves in the field. . . This woman takes a waxen image and baptizes it, another a log of wood, another a dead man's bone, or anything that she can use for witchcraft<sup>1</sup>. One woman bewitches with herbs, another with the holy chrism-oil, another with God's holy Body. Fie! no Jew would do thus, nor no heathen. . . The woman does witchcraft before she gets a man; magic here, magic there. She conjures before her child is born, she conjures before its baptism, she conjures after baptism. Now, lo! thou hast this for all thy pains, that thy child will ever be the worse for thine incantations. It is marvel that thou hast not bewitched thine husband into leprosy!" Towards the end of the thirteenth century, Etienne de Bourbon complains of such practices (p. 328). Sprenger, in his *Malleus Maleficarum*, says the same, and adds "with other sacramental things they practise innumerable superstitions." Rosignoli tells of a lady of Santarem who used it as an aphrodisiac charm (p. 181); this comes out also from the confessions of the nun Madeleine Bavent of Louviers, and in the appendix to vol. 1 of de Potter's *Vie de Scipion de' Ricci*. Although, in reading the numerous stories told by Lancre of priestly sorcerers who sang black Masses to Satan, in parody of the Eucharist, we must remember that much of his evidence was collected under torture, yet all is in such direct concordance with the other evidence as to leave no doubt that, among the more backward populations at least, witchcraft long thrived on such parodies of the sacraments (pp. 459 ff., 488 ff.).

For farther instances see Herolt, *Ex. E.* xxx-xxxv; B. Pez, *Agnes Blannbekin*, p. 48; *Lives of the Brethren*, p. 178. Guibert of Nogent gives two instances of monastic sorcerers within his own ken, P.L. vol. 156, cols. 891-4; the first had qualified for his work by renouncing Christ and by other abominations; there are several instances in the *Grandes Chroniques de St-Denis*. In 1258, Odo Rigaldi found one of his flock, the priest of Roumesnil, "ill-famed of witchcraft" (p. 329).

The least reprehensible of these practices was that which treated the chalice-ablutions as an eye-wash. St-Pierre de Chavanon thus cured (though not intentionally) a blind woman (D'Achery, *Spicilegium*, II, 694; Paris, 1681). Salimbene tells us how a saintly friend of his used to rebuke the blear-eyed folk who came begging for these ablutions after Mass: "Go, God give you evil speed! put the water in your wine when ye drink it, and not in your eyes!" (p. 219: *From St Francis to Dante*, 2nd ed. p. 138).

<sup>1</sup> Schönbach, *L.c.* 27 has collected a whole list from Berthold of these rites where the devil's sacraments were modelled on the sacraments of the Church.

## NEWMAN AND CONDEMNED CRIMINALS

(1) J. H. Newman, *The Social State of Catholic Countries, etc.* pp. 20-3:

"O how contrary is the look, the bearing of the Catholic Church to these poor outcasts of mankind [condemned criminals]! There was a time, when one who denied his Lord was brought to repentance by a glance; and such is the method which His Church teaches to those nations who acknowledge her authority and her sway. The civil magistrate, stern of necessity in his function, and inexorable in his resolve, at her bidding, gladly puts on a paternal countenance, and takes on him an office of mercy towards the victim of his wrath. He infuses the ministry of life into the ministry of death; he afflicts the body for the good of the soul, and converts the penalty of human law into an instrument of everlasting bliss. It is good for human beings to die as infants, before they have known good or evil, if they have but received the baptism of the Church; but, next to these, who are the happiest, who are the safest, for whose departure have we more cause to rejoice, and be thankful, than for theirs, who, if they live on, are so likely to relapse into old habits of sin, but who are taken out of this miserable world in the flower of their contrition, and in the freshness of their preparation;—just at the very moment when they have perfected themselves in good dispositions, and from their heart have put off sin, and have come humbly for pardon, and have received the grace of absolution, and have been fed with the bread of Angels, and thus, amid the prayers of all men, have departed to their Maker and their Judge? I say, 'the prayers of all': for O, the difference, in this respect, in the execution of the extreme sentence of the law, between a Catholic State and another! We have all heard of the scene of impiety and profaneness which attends on the execution of a criminal in England; so much so, that benevolent and thoughtful men are perplexed between the evil of privacy and the outrages which publicity occasions. Well, England surpasses Rome in ten thousand matters of this world, but never would the Holy City tolerate an enormity which powerful England cannot hinder. An arch-confraternity was instituted there at the close of the fifteenth century, under the invocation of San Giovanni Decollato, that Holy Baptist, who lost his head by a king's sentence, though an unjust one; and it exercises its pious offices towards condemned criminals even now. When a culprit is to be executed, the night preceeding the fatal day, two priests of the brotherhood, who sometimes happen to be bishops or persons of high authority in the city, remain with him in prayer, attend him on the scaffold the next morning, and assist him through every step of the terrible ceremonial of which he is the subject. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed in all the churches all over the city, that the faithful may assist a sinner about to make a

compulsory appearance before his Judge. The crowd about the scaffold is occupied in but one thought, whether he has shown signs of contrition. Various reports are in circulation, that he is obdurate, that he has yielded, that he is obdurate still. The women cry out that it is impossible; Jesus and Mary will see to it; they will not believe that it is so; they are sure that he will submit himself to his God before he enters into His presence. However, it is perhaps confirmed that the unhappy man is still wrestling with his pride and hardness of heart; and though he has that illumination of faith which a Catholic cannot but possess, yet he cannot bring himself to hate and abhor sins which, except in their awful consequences, are, as far as their enjoyment, gone from him for ever. He cannot taste again the pleasure of revenge or of forbidden indulgence, yet he cannot get himself to give it up, though the world is passing from him. The excitement of the crowd is at its height; an hour passes; the suspense is intolerable, when the news is brought of a change; that, before the crucifix, in the solitude of his cell, at length, the—unhappy no longer—the happy criminal has subdued himself; has prayed with real self-abasement; has expressed, has felt, a charitable, a tender thought, towards those he has hated; has resigned himself lovingly to his destiny; has blessed the hand that smites him; has supplicated pardon; has confessed with all his heart, and placed himself at the disposal of his Priest, to make such amends as he can make in his last hour to God and man; has even desired to submit here to indignity, to pain, to which he is not sentenced; has taken on himself any length of purgatory hereafter, if thereby he may, through God's mercy, show his sincerity, and his desire of pardon and of gaining the lowest place in the kingdom of heaven. The news comes; it is communicated through the vast multitude all at once; and, I have heard from those who have been present, never shall they forget the instantaneous shout of joy which burst forth from every tongue, and formed itself into one concordant act of thanksgiving, in acknowledgment of the grace vouchsafed to one so near eternity.

"It is not wonderful then to find the holy men, who, from time to time, have done the pious office of preparing such criminals for death, so confident of their salvation. 'So well convinced was Father Claver of the eternal happiness of almost all whom he assisted,' says this saintly missionary's biographer, 'that, speaking once of some persons who had in a bad spirit delivered a criminal into the hands of justice, he said, "God forgive them; but they have secured the salvation of this man at the probable risk of their own." Most of the criminals considered it a grace to die in the hands of this holy man. As soon as he spake to them the most savage and indomitable became gentle as lambs; and, in place of their ordinary imprecations, nothing was heard but sighs, and the sound of bloody disciplines, which they took before leaving the prison for execution.'"

(2) The natural result of this may be seen in the Sicilian criminal-worship described by Pitré, *Biblioteca delle Tradizioni*, etc. xvii, 15 ff. (Palermo, 1889) and summarized in Trede, III, 346. See also Mr E. G.

Hartland's paper on this cult in *Transactions of the 3rd Internat. Congress for the Hist. of Religions* (Oxford, 1908) and the fuller illustrated paper in *Folk-lore*, XXI (1910), 168 ff.

Pilgrims, especially women, walk out from Palermo to the Chiesa de' Decollati, often barefoot. There stands an altar to St John Baptist, the natural patron of beheaded folk. They sing certain prayers, including a sort of hymn:

“Armuzzi di li corpi decullati  
Chi 'n terra siti nati  
'N purgatoriu vi stati,  
'N paradisu siti aspittati,  
Prigati l' Eternu Patri  
Pi li mei nicissitati,  
Prigati lu Signi  
Chi li nimici mi vennu 'n favuri. . .”<sup>1</sup>

Then the worshipper retires to a side-chapel and lays his or her ear to a certain stone; if he hears a slight rustling, this shows that his prayer has been accepted. “You should then see the worshipper's joy! it is expressed in the instantaneous flush of his face and the flashing of his eyes. He believes he has touched heaven with his finger”<sup>2</sup>.

## 14

### THE MULTITUDE OF MASSES

It is seldom that we can get exact calculations; I therefore subjoin two which I have happened to meet with.

(1) The Franciscan Tertiaries of Croisset, founded at the end of the fifteenth century, “en 1730 devaient acquitter annuellement, en vertu de contrats notariés, 1456 messes basses et 3 grandes” (*Environs de Rouen*, p. 12). This was a small house; it is only due to a lawsuit that we happen to know the details.

(2) Saint-Claude, on the other hand, was one of the great abbeys; and its modern historian thus describes the embarrassment caused by the accumulation of Masses in one of its dependent churches (Benoît, *St-Claude*, II (1892)): “Nous avons déjà remarqué le grand nombre des fondations faites dans l'Église de Saint-Romain. Voici ces fondations, telles qu'elles existaient dans le premier quart du xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle; nous les

<sup>1</sup> “Souls of the beheaded bodies, ye who were born on earth, who are now in purgatory, and who are expected in paradise, pray the Eternal Father for my necessities; pray the Lord that my enemies may be reconciled to me.”

<sup>2</sup> To this, Pitré adds the footnote: “Indeed, this scene is well worth the sight even of those who take no interest in popular creeds. My foreign friends who come to Sicily, when I take them to this church and chapel, stand there open-mouthed, wondering into what sort of world they have strayed.”

trouvons énumérées dans un document de 1721 : 415 messes solennelles à diacre, sous-diacre et chapiers ou choristes, dont l'honoraire a été fixé en 1688 par M. Morange, vicaire général, à 3 livres ; 132 messes à diacre et sous-diacre sans chapiers, réglées à 2 francs chacune ; 226 messes hautes sans diacre ni sous-diacre, réglées à 1 livre ; 1200 messes basses, à 10 sols ; 45 Matines et Laudes à 4 livres et 1/2 ; 40 Complies, à 2 l. ; 105 Vêpres, réglées à 2 l. ; 25 vigiles ou psaumes pénitentiels, à 2 l. ; 72 processions, à 2 l. ; 3 sermons par an, réglés à 3 l. chacun.

"Or, les fonds qui assuraient ces fondations étaient, nous ne savons comment, considérablement diminués dans les crises financières du système de Law. Le discrédit qui frappa alors les billets de banque fit descendre les revenus de ces fondations de 3028 livres 10 sols à 1171 l. 10 sols. Le 20 novembre 1720, les familiers prièrent l'archevêque de Lyon, Mgr François-Paul de Neuville de Villeroy, de réduire le nombre des offices dans la proportion de la diminution des revenus. L'archevêque, après avoir étudié les mémoires qui lui étaient présentés, régla tout à nouveau, par son ordonnance du 31 janvier 1721, les offices de la familiarité : il réduisit les messes solennelles avec choristes, de 415 à 365 ; les Matines et les Laudes, de 36 à 9 ; les Vêpres, de 105 à 6 ; les processions, de 72 à 12. Il supprima les 132 messes à diacre et sous-diacre sans choristes, les 226 messes hautes, les 1200 messes basses, les 40 Complies, les 24 vigiles et les 3 sermons."

We cannot wonder if the best monks sometimes felt all this as a burden. Ratpert, the model monastic schoolmaster of St-Gall in its most flourishing days, "often neglected the services and Masses, saying: 'We hear good Masses when we teach others to celebrate them'" (Ekkehard, ch. iii, p. 24).

## 15

## THE SCHOOL OF THE EUCHARIST

The sentence in my text may be illustrated by the chapter-headings of a book published under this name by a Jesuit father, Toussaint Bridoul, at Lille in 1672. I quote from the English translation by Dr W. Clagett, printed in 1687 for Randall Taylor. I have had no opportunity of comparing this with the original ; but the large majority are well-known medieval stories, and these bear out the translator's claim to have done his work faithfully. A collection of this kind enables the modern reader to judge for himself of the mentality of the Religious and their lay readers, even at the end of the seventeenth century, in this direction. The stories being arranged alphabetically in French, the translator has kept that order.

The Holy Sacrament of the Altar, instituted in the Church, for the nourishing, enlightening, fortifying and comforting the Faithful, is one of the most Sublime and Salutary Mysteries, that is to be found in the Catholic Religion. It stood in need also of a God, for to institute it, and to propose it to us, as the strongest Argument of the Love that he



bore towards mankind. Which makes me astonish'd why the Hereticks should conspire with all their might for to extirpate it (conducted, no doubt, by the Devil), who pretend only to take away the belief and the use of it, so to destroy Souls more easily, who cannot subsist long in grace, without the participation of this Divine and Celestial Food. Wherefore without troubling my self to confute these hair-brain'd People, who turn a deaf Ear to all that the Holy Fathers have said about it, and have renounced their reason, I resolved to send them to School to the Beasts, who have showed a particular inclination, not without a Superior conduct, for the Worship and Defence of this Truth. I have put my discourse into an Alphabetical order, to the end that by this last remedy, they may become more wise, and return to their reason, being taught by the Animals, that have none. If they receive no benefit hereby no more than others, yet I hope it will be serviceable to Catholiques, to enkindle their zeal, by a more careful frequenting this Bread of strong men: and not only serve the grown and aged persons, who have already a full belief and high esteem for this Divine Sacrament; but also (which is one of my motives hereto) to imprint on the Minds of Children, the first belief, and a wise regard for this Sacrament, to the end that they may come to it, when they are judged capable to receive it, with more devotion and reverence.

Which is that which I have seen put in practise by good Fathers of Families, who use to put into their Childrens Hands, such like Devout Histories, to dispose them to communicate worthily, when they first receive the Sacrament.

It is also most certain that Histories and Examples, however it comes to pass, have a great advantage to make impressions on the minds of Children, above discourses and reasonings, which are above the capacities of youth.

### Chapter-Headings

A. I. *Abeilles, Bees*. 1. Bees honour the H. Host divers ways, by lifting it from the Earth, and carrying it in their Hives as it were in Procession. 2. Bees adore the H. Host, and sing the Divine Praises, dividing themselves into two Quires. 3. Bees erect a compleat Chappel with their Wax. 4. They revenge the injuries done to the H. Sacrament. II. *Agneau, Lambe*. 1. A Lamb of St Francis makes signs to a Lady to go to Masse. 2. A Lamb of St Coleta kneeled at the Elevation during the Masse. III. *Aragnee, a Spider*. 1. A Spider do's not at all impoyson at the Masse: What happened to one of the Cistercian Order, to St Conrade and St Norbert. 2. Another instance to the same purpose. 3. Another like the former. 4. A Spider revenges an affront done to the H. Sacrament. IV. *Asne, Asses*. 1. Asses honour the H. Sacrament, making way for a Priest that carried it. 2. Another such like Story. 3. Another admirable History of what happened, not to an Asse, but to a man turned into an Asse. B. I. *Biche, A Hind*. 1. Hinds come to Masse on a H. Martyrs day, and make an offering of a young Cheverel. II. *Bœufs, Oxen*. 1. Oxen adore the H. Sacra-

ment. 2. Another story to the same purpose. III. *Brebis, a Sheep*. A Sheep kneels at the Masse, at the Elevation of the Consecrated Host. C. I. *Cannes, Ducks*. 1. Ducks are present at Masse on St Nicholas day, May 9. 2. Young ducks defend the Church, and punish Offenders till they make reparation for the wrongs they had done. II. *Cerf, a Stag*. A Stag traces the Circuit and the place of the Church of Nostre Dame du Puy, at Velay in France. III. *Chenilles, Caterpillars*. Caterpillars revenge the injury done to the H. Sacrament. IV. *Cheval, A Horse*. 1. A Horse given to a Priest that carried the H. Sacrament to a sick person. 2. A Jew's Horse pays respect to a Priest, who went with the H. Sacrament to a sick person. 3. A Horse signifies to his Master, that he should hear Masse, before he went about his affairs. 4. Horses lose their lives for saving the honour due to the H. Hosts. V. *Chevre, She-goat*. A Shee-goat brings up an Infant devoted to the H. Sacrament. VI. *Chiens, Dogs*. 1. Dogs revenge the injury done to the H. Hosts. 2. A Dog punished by Heaven, for making a noise during the Masse. 3. A Dog respects and adores the H. Sacrament, and punishes the Blasphemy of his Master. 4. A Peasant being delivered from mischievous Dogs, devoted himself to the H. Sacrament. 5. An Infant was born with a Head like a Greyhound, whose Father was hunting without regarding to say Masse. 6. The admirable vigilancy and devoirs of a Dog, in honour of the H. Sacrament. VII. *Colombes, Pigeons*. 1. Several Holy Priests have been honoured by Pigeons, while they said Masse. 2. A Pigeon brings a H. Host, to communicate one newly Converted to the Faith. 3. Pigeons informed the Eastern Bishops concerning the Holiness of the Sacrifice, and of the Pope that celebrated. 4. A Pigeon sucks the Blood consecrated by a wicked Priest, and restores it to the Priest, after he had confessed his Sin. S. Edmund was communicated by a Pigeon. 5. A Pigeon marks out the outside lines, and form of a Chappel of our Ladies. VIII. *Ravens, Crows, Choughs*, and other Birds of Prey, assembled ordinarily nigh to Ravenna, on S. Apollinarius's day, during the Divine Office, that was said there. D. 1. *A Dragon* is made tame by the virtue of the H. Masse. 2. Dragons revenge the injuries done to the H. Eucharist. E. I. The *Elephants* at Goa, come in the Procession of the H. Sacrament. II. The *Ermine* serves for a subject, to honour the H. Sacrament. F. I. A *Falcon* teaches us the reverence and decency due to places, where the H. Sacrament lies, and is kept. II. *Fourmis, Ants*. Ants by the Punishment that befell them, shew the reverence due to Altars, and to the H. Sacrament. G. I. *Gelines, Hens*. 1. Hens honour the H. Sacrament. 2. A Hen revenges the injury done to the H. Eucharist. II. *Grenouille, a Frog*. Frogs give respect to the H. Sacrament. H. *Hiron-delle, a Swallow*. The Honour paid by this sort of Birds. 2. Another History of the same kind. J. *Jument, a Mare*. 1. Mares adore the H. Sacrament. 2. Mares and Oxen passing through a Marsh, adore our Lord in the H. Eucharist. 3. A Woman appeared in form of a Mare, for her negligence in frequenting the Communion. L. I. *Lapins, Conies*. Conies adore the H. Sacrament. II. *Linx ou chevre sauvage, a*

*Shamois or wild Goat*, serves to honour the H. Sacrament, in the deliverance of the Emperor Maximilian I. III. *Loup, a Wolf*. 1. A Wolf, in consideration of the Communion received, quits his Prey, so doing homage to the H. Sacrament. 2. A Man and his Wife being transformed into a Wolf by force of an imprecation, desire to receive the communion, which was done to the Woman, being at the point of death. 3. A Wolf abusing the Beasts of S. Isidore, thereupon dyed, by virtue of the H. Sacrament. M. I. *Mouche, a Fly*. 1. A Fly satisfies for the irreverence she had committed towards the H. Sacrament by being burnt. 2. Another such like Story. 3. Another like Punishment of another Fly. II. 1. A *Mule* adores the Sacrament. 2. A Mule serves for an Occasion to honour the H. Sacrament. 3. A Mule by dying acknowledges the Verity of the H. Sacrament. O. I. *Oiseau, a Bird*. 1. A Bird brings S. Boniface and the Company with him, their dinner, after he had celebrated Mass. 2. A fine Bird came to cheer a Monk with her melodious Singing, after he had received the Communion, as if she invited him to Heaven. II. *Ours, a Bear*. A Bear serves for a subject to honour the H. Sacrament. P. I. *Passereau, a Sparrow*. Sparrows by their Obedience and their Death, testify their regard to the H. Sacrament. II. *Partridges* chastise the Hunter, who had taken them, for having been defective in attending Masse, and flew away, tho' they were put into the Pot. III. *Poissons, Fishes*. 1. Fishes honour the H. Sacrament. 2. Another respect, rendered by a Fish to the H. Host. 3. *A Whale*, a Fish of the greater kind, lent his Back to say Masse upon, on Easter-Day. IV. *Pourceau, Swine*. Swine adore the H. Sacrament. R. I. *Renard, a Fox*. A Fox quits the Hen he had carried away, by vertue of the H. Sacrament. II. *Rossignol, a Nightingale*. A Nightingale advertises a Devout Frier to prepare for his Voyage to Heaven, for his having a particular Inclination to attend Masses. S. I. *A Scorpion* taken and swallowed down at Masse, hurts not the Priest at all that did it. II. *Sanglier, a wild Boar*. A Wild Boar shows what respect is due to Altars, the Sacred Mansions of the H. Sacrament. III. *Sauterelles, Locusts or Grasshoppers*. Locusts or Grasshoppers acknowledge the vertue of the Eucharist, and of the H. Sacrifice, by their Death. IV. *Souris, a Mouse*. Mice by certain cognisance, yield respect to the H. Sacrament. T. *Taureau, a Bull*. A Bull acknowledges our Lord, under the Species of the Sacrament, deposing its fierceness, to be present at the Masse. V. I. *Vache, a Cow*. A Cow revenges an Injury done to the H. Sacrament. II. *Vers, Wormes*. 1. Wormes are found dead, for having eaten up the Flowers designed for the honour of the H. Sacrament. 2. Wormes revenge the Injury done to the H. Sacrament. III. *Vipers* honour the H. Sacrament, by quitting those whom they had afflicted."

## 16

## GOOD AND BAD MASSES

The common and natural point of view is perhaps best expressed by the Gilbertine canon Robert Mannyng of Brunne, who tells us that he writes for the people, and who here, as elsewhere, typifies the better-class popular mind. In lines 10,427 ff. of *Handlyng Synne* he tells of a Suffolk man whose soul complained that it was little helped in Purgatory by a friar's Mass, "done for him in common"; he besought his wife in a vision to get a special Mass for him, by a priest of specially good life:

"My parte y had of that messe,  
As of thing that comune ys;  
ȝyf one for me were specyale seyde,  
That onther for me blys had nede,—  
ȝyf the prest were of lyfe so good  
That God hys preyer undyrstode—  
Y hope than, grace to haue,  
That hys messē myȝt me save."  
Ofte he seyde[ē] to hys wyfe  
"A prest! A prest! of clenē lyfe."  
On the mornē, sone she ȝede  
To the frerēs eft god spede,  
And shewed hyt to the pryour,  
And prey[ed] hym of socour,  
"ȝyf he had any brother,  
That he hoped, were better than other,  
That wyl singe me a messe  
For a man that dedē ys;  
And at myn esē he shal haue,  
To a pytaunce, that he will craue."...

So the prior chose out the best friar in his convent; then the soul appeared to the wife and said

"...This messe to me ys more wurthy  
Than alle the worlde, an hunder sythe,  
Ne myȝt haue made me halfe so blythe;  
Hys prayer was to God so dere,  
That he besoghte, that wilde he here,  
ȝyf he had preyd for an hundred mo,  
Fro pyne to blys he had broȝt tho."  
[Upon which R. de B. moralizes:]  
Yn this tale, than, shewed ys,  
Ouer alle gode than ys the messe;...  
...Also thys talē wyl mene  
That the preste be gode and clene;  
Than wyl Ihesu Christ hym here,  
For what thing he maketh preyere.

The same natural point of view is expressed in the care which the founders of chantries sometimes took that the priests thus endowed to sing their soul-masses should be "chaste and honest"<sup>1</sup>.

And here they had, on the whole, the support even of the strictest scholastic philosophy. Aquinas debates the question fully, "whether the Mass of an evil priest be of the same worth as that of a good priest?" (*Sum. Theol.* pars III, q. lxxxii, art. 6). He concludes: "As to the sacrament, the Mass of an evil priest is worth no less than that of a good priest; for in either case the same sacrament is performed. The prayer which is made in the Mass may be considered in two ways; *first*, in so far as it hath efficacy from the devotion of the praying priest, wherein there is no doubt that the Mass of the better priest is the more fruitful. *Secondly* we may consider it in so far as the prayer in the Mass is uttered by the priest in the person of the whole Church, whereof he is minister; which ministry remaineth even in sinners, as we have said above concerning the ministry of Christ; wherefore, in so far as this is concerned, not only is the priest's prayer fruitful in the Mass, but also all his prayers in divine service, even though his private prayers be unfruitful."

Aquinas goes on (art. 9) to decide that those who hear the Mass of an excommunicate, heretical or schismatic priest are partakers of his sin. But so many priests were *ipso facto* excommunicate for different transgressions, and especially for concubinage, that this created a serious practical difficulty; therefore St Thomas adds: "Although fornication be not more grievous than other [mortal] sins, yet men are more prone thereunto through the concupiscence of the flesh; therefore this sin is specially forbidden unto priests by the Church, which hath decreed that no man should hear the Mass of a concubinary priest. But we must understand this [only] of a notorious concubinary, either as convicted and sentenced, or as so evidently guilty in fact that his sin cannot be concealed by any subterfuge." Further than this it was impossible for him to go in moderating the natural popular prejudice in favour of the more worthy celebrant; for the main question had already been decided in Canon Law by a decree of Alexander I: "the more worthy are the priests, the more easily are they heard in the necessities for which they cry."

Monastic reformers naturally took the same ground. To St Bernard, it seemed quite justifiable that monks should refuse the sacraments from "the leprous hands" of irregular priests or bishops; it would be like the eating of flesh offered to idols; or bowing the knee to Baal; a good monk would rather die (*Ep.* 236, § 2). The soul of a dead Cis-

<sup>1</sup> J. Smyth, *Lives of the Berkeleys* (Bristol and Gloucs. Arch. Soc.), I, 335. Lord Berkeley, founding a chantry in 17th Ed. III, provided, as Smyth puts it "that he should live chastely and honestly, and not come to markets, alehouses, or taverns, neither should frequent plays or unlawful games: in a word he made this his priest by these ordinances to be one of those honest men whom we mistake and call puritans in these our days." See pp. 337, 338, for similar prescriptions as to the chantries he founded at Bristol and Worcester.

tercian appeared to one of his brethren and complained of the long delay in purgatory which he suffered, together with other dead monks of the same convent: "we are yet delayed from passing into Heaven by reason of the negligence of certain of the brethren, whereof some chant tardily, others lukewarmly, but all negligently, the psalms and prayers which they owe to our souls; nor are they guilty towards us alone, but Christ Himself hath much against them, for they provoke Him to vomiting with this lukewarm pursuit of their vow of purer life"<sup>1</sup>.

As Aquinas gives the most scientific Dominican judgement on this subject, and we have the same echoed by Humbert de Romans (p. 541 g), so we get its popular and practical application in their fellow-friar of a century later, Bromyard (*Summa Praedicatorum*, M. x, 1 ff.). The Body of Christ is the same in all Masses; but "they contract diversities through the merit or demerit, devotion or indevotion, of the ministrants." We may send two equally valuable presents to a lord; but if one of our messengers is acceptable to him and the other hateful, the two presents will have different effects. God, it is true, does not reject this present even through the vilest messenger: "He who accepted the sacrifice of His Son by the hands of the Jews who offered Him on the Cross, doth receive that same Son when offered by the unclean hands of even the worst priest. . . Wherefore a certain worthy professor of theology, in his lectures from his chair, said that he would rather have one good priest celebrating for him than a thousand evil priests; for the one, though alone, is heard, while the other thousand are not heard. Whereof we have a clear example in the matter of Elias and King Ahab's priests; for he, on one side, prayed alone, and they were eight hundred and fifty, praying from sunrise even unto noon; yet were they not heard. . . Of Elias, as of every priest of good life, we may say with St James 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much'; of every evil priest we may say with the Book of Proverbs: 'He shall cry, and I will not hear.' It is manifest, therefore, that many deceive and are deceived when they keep or hire ill-living priests to pray for themselves or their friends, living or dead; which they sometimes do for the reason I have touched upon already, C. v. 19<sup>2</sup>. For

<sup>1</sup> *Spec. Hist.* p. 261 (lib. vii, c. 109).

<sup>2</sup> The reference is to these earlier words of Bromyard's treatise: "In other arts, the artificers are constrained to learn before they can gain their livelihood; for he who hath not learnt may not earn his living, since men leave them in their ignorance and no man will hire them; but in the art of ecclesiastical offices, whether of prelates or of lower clergy, though by its nature it be the noblest of all, and the most perilous in practice, yet few men learn it before they set to work, ruling [parishes] and singing Mass and absolving sins. Whereof the principal cause is that the condition requisite to all other arts is lacking to this art in our days—*moderno tempore*; for herein no insufficiency doth repel; nay, men do seek for the insufficient man; nor do they seek for prelates the more sufficient, but the more lavish or the nearest of kin or some such reason; nor, among priests, do they seek the purest, but him who can be hired at the cheapest rate; nor the most veracious confessor, but the easiest." And he again refers us to a similar pronouncement in S. i, 4.

they defraud themselves or those for whom they pray, as hath been set out above; for their prayer is not so effectual as that of good men; and in this work they ought not to look only to the efficacy that cometh *ex opere operato*, in the sacrament, but also to that which cometh *ex opere operante*, i.e. from the devotion and merit of the celebrant. Moreover, such men deceive the celebrants also, giving them an occasion of ruin. For, if no man would hire or promote bad priests, then at least *de facto* they would be attracted and constrained to live well; and hunger would bring them to God, even as it brought the Prodigal Son. But now, seeing that the evil are as readily hired and promoted as the good, they care the less to live well. Wherefore those who keep or hire such priests do not only defraud themselves of spiritual good (as I have shown in E. ii, 15)<sup>1</sup>, but sin also in giving these men occasion to transgress. To such a man, therefore, I would not give one halfpenny to celebrate a whole year for my soul or for my father's; for I know that 'a friend of fools shall become like to them' (Prov. xiii, 20)."

Meffret, a couple of generations later, takes the same view. "Of old, priests were adorned with continence of chastity, knowledge of truth and eminent charity. But certain priests of today defile and disfigure themselves with incontinence of carnal lust. . . They deceive the people, who give them oblations and offerings that by their prayers they may blot out their sins, and obtain grace for them by their holiness of life<sup>2</sup>. When an unpleasing person is sent to intercede, the mind of the angered lord is provoked to greater wrath, and of such men Malachi writeth (ii, 2), 'I will curse your blessings,' as though God said, 'When you bless my people, I will curse you.' But some man will say: 'Whence cometh it that in other ways priests are found adorned with other virtues, except that they suffer from the vice of incontinence?'" Meffret explains this at length by the story of Achilles; incontinence is the Achilles' heel, the vulnerable spot; and "continence should continue to our lives' end; but, because priests pray not unto God for it, therefore they are incontinent" (*Temp.* p. 25).

Yet, in default of any strict attempt to enforce this abstinence from the Masses of notorious sinners, the difficulty rather increased than diminished as the Middle Ages wore on. So far as I know, there is in all the published episcopal registers only one notice of enforcement. In that of Bothe of Hereford (p. 190, A.D. 1527) all the clergy of the rural deanery of Archenfield are bidden publicly to warn the inhabitants not to hear any Mass celebrated by David ap John of Monmouth, who, in spite of the bishop's injunctions, continues to cohabit with Alice

<sup>1</sup> This is another passage in which Bromyard deals with unworthy priests: "God is not placated by their prayers, but rather provoked unto wrath; by whose guilt the whole kingdom and the whole land wherein they dwell is oftentimes afflicted and plagued, whereas it should have been succoured by their intercessions."

<sup>2</sup> Here comes a reference to Gratian's *Decretum*, pars II, c. i, quaest. 1, c. 91: "Priests eat the sins of the people... and, the worthier they are, the more easily are they heard [by God]."

Philpotts. It is probable that the spread of Lutheranism had brought this matter to a head. But things soon found their level again; and again the law became practically a dead letter under shelter of the eternal question: At what point does a transgression become "notorious," and therefore call for interference?

## 17

## CISTERCIANS AND THE B.V.M.

The following is a translation of part of the index to *Cistercium Bis-Tertium*, a sexcentenary volume covering the years 1098-1698, which was printed at Prague in 1700 by A. Sartorius. The author was a notary Apostolic, and enjoyed many ecclesiastical distinctions in his day. Here and there I have illustrated the bare words of the index by a reference to the text of the book itself.

"MARY Mother of GOD espouseth St Robert [Founder of Cîteaux] with a ring in his mother's womb<sup>1</sup>. She contendeth for the motherhood of the Order. She giveth to the blessed Alberic the first constitutions for the Order. To St Stephen [Harding] she giveth her belt. To St Bernard she oftentimes giveth Jesus into his arms. She visiteth and healeth him in sickness. She saluteth him in answer to his salutation. Oftentimes even she feedeth him bodily from her statue<sup>2</sup>. How she became patron to the blessed Yvette. She is Patroness, Lady, and Protectress of Cîteaux. Her love and favour to the Order. She visiteth the Cistercians, and refresheth them with her conversation. She cometh visibly to their succour against the demons<sup>3</sup>. On the blessed Pedro, Prince Royal of Portugal, she imprinteth the Sign of the Cross, and driveth away his carnal temptations. She defendeth the Order against the heretics. She calleth the Cistercians her best friends. Through the mouth of Rainiero, Confessor to the Pope, she commandeth Innocent III to cease from his oppression of the Cistercians, even threatening him<sup>4</sup>. She persuadeth certain folk to enter the Order. She appeareth oftentimes in Cistercian dress to the blessed Hermann, a lay brother at

<sup>1</sup> Text, p. 8. "It was not right that the Virgin should be fertile without a spouse; wherefore our Father Robert was given as a spouse to Mary before she gave birth to Cîteaux, even as Joseph was given when she was about to bear Christ."

<sup>2</sup> "From her sweet breasts, to moisten St Bernard's lips with her virgin milk," pp. 91, 250.

<sup>3</sup> This is the story of Werner, in Caes. Heist.

<sup>4</sup> p. 253. Innocent contemplated certain restrictions of the very considerable Cistercian privileges: the Virgin sent Rainiero to protest in "words like thunderbolts": "Thou strivest now to destroy this Order whereof I am Protectress; but thou shalt not prevail; and, unless thou repent quickly of thy purpose, I will crush thee and all thy power." Not that she intended (explains Father Sartorius) to strike at the Roman See, whereof our excellent Mother is no enemy, but rather Patroness and Advocate, but only at the person of this misguided Pope.



Villers. In the place of the blessed Hermann, lay brother at Himmerode, she prayeth the prayers which he hath omitted. Christ Himself giveth her as spouse to the blessed Peter, lay brother at Villers. She offereth herself as spouse to the blessed Abundus. She appeareth visibly in a Cistercian choir, and singeth an anthem, clad in Cistercian cowl. She layeth the Christ-child in the blessed Fastrade's arms. To brother Walther v. Birbech she sendeth a golden cross. She setteth a garland of flowers on the head of the blessed nun Mary [of Villers], whom she espouseth to her Son. She crowneth the blessed Stepo. To the blessed Lawrence she giveth a rosary. She maketh the blessed Henry abbot by gift of a staff. Cistercians, even after death, continue to worship her. She sprinkleth with her milk the blessed Mary de Vela. She wipeth away the sweat from labouring Cistercians<sup>1</sup>. She healeth their languors and pains. She is present at their deathbed. She revealeth to Cistercians the temporal assumption of her body. She delighteth in their choral chants. To the monks of Himmerode she promiseth eternal glory. She sprinkleth Cistercians with holy water; prepareth and cooketh their meat; refresheth them with sweet food when they are about to enter their church. She paceth round their dormitory. The author's panegyric of Mary<sup>2</sup>. She layeth the child Jesus on the couch of the blessed Boniface in his sickness; she standeth by the deathbed of St Hedwige. She returneth the blessed Johanna's greeting. She is protectress of our Order. Through the Cistercians she saveth the world from destruction<sup>3</sup>. She protecteth them before God's judgement-seat. At Clairvaux she presideth at the Chapter, and impresseth kisses upon the elders there<sup>4</sup>. She guardeth the Cistercians in heaven under her mantle<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This is the story of the Heavenly Reapers which decided Caesarius's conversion; see above, p. 347.

<sup>2</sup> This fills four pages: here is a specimen: "Peter's tongue bewrayed him, that he was a Galilean: the Cistercian's tongue bewrayeth him as a son of Mary; for on the lips and tongues of each one I read even today those characters which Mary once wrote there in her virgin milk: *Thou art my son; I have begotten thee*; by reason whereof she hath earned in our Order the titles both of Mother and of Nursing-Mother."

<sup>3</sup> p. 593. This is the story which Dominicans and Franciscans claimed for themselves; Christ was on the point of destroying the world, when Mary pleaded, "Spare them, my Son, spare them! if not for their own sake, at least for that of my friends, the Cistercian Order." "Whence" (continues Sartorius), "I have reason to conjecture that the Divine Virgin—*Divam Virginem* hath us Cistercians as dear as her own bowels and paps, seeing that she is wont to implore and placate her Son alike in the name of her own bowels and in the name of our Order; for she knew right well that the Son would deny nothing to her when she pleaded in our name, since he knew that she for her part was wont to deny none of our petitions."

<sup>4</sup> p. 596, an. 1159. She took the Abbot President's place, with Jesus on her lap; after the proceedings, she turned to the two senior abbots on either hand, gave them the Christ-child to hold, and kissed each "under chaste blandishments."

<sup>5</sup> p. 597. A Cistercian, rapt to heaven, was shocked to see no fellow-Cistercians there: he cast himself in misery at the Virgin's feet. She drew aside her mantle, and showed him white-robed and jubilant multitudes:

She promiseth her unfailing succour to the Order; by her it is protected. To the blessed Bertram she revealeth that her body was taken to heaven on the 40th day after her death. To the blessed Arnulf she revealeth her Seven Heavenly Joys. She commandeth the keeping of the Feast of her Immaculate Conception<sup>1</sup>. List of her wonder-working images in different Cistercian churches<sup>2</sup>. Her girdle worketh miracles at the Cistercian house of Javache."

## 18

## ST BERNARD'S SPOT

I have translated this story in *Med. Garner*, p. 665, from one of the most popular of preacher's manuals. The saint appeared to a certain visionary with a stain on his white robe, "and told how he bare that blemish for that he held the conception of the Blessed Virgin in original sin." Cardinal J. de Turrecremata, in his *Tractatus de Veritate Conceptionis B.V.M.* written by command of the papal legates for the Council of Bâle, finds it necessary to disprove this absurd figment by serious argument (pars VI, cap. 11, ed. Oxon. 1869, p. 291). Another well-known theologian, even before this, had devoted a whole treatise to the question—Henricus de Hassia [Heinrich v. Langenstein, 1325–97 A.D.] *Contra Maculam Sancto Bernhardo Mendaciter Impositam* (Strassburg, 1516). But the other side was favoured by the Franciscans and the multitude; and it would be interesting to trace how long the legend continued to be repeated.

## 19

## MARY-LEGENDS

## A. General view

A very good idea can be formed from quite modern books; e.g. any unexpurgated translation of St Alfonso Liguori's *Glories of Mary*, or Pusey's *Eirenicon*, or the article on Liguori's *Glories* which was printed in *The Christian Remembrancer* for Oct. 1855, with numerous verbatim extracts from Mgr Weld's new translation of that book. The two last-

"To all [good Cistercians] is this same mansion predestined, under Mary's cloak; no man may dare or be able to win a higher crown than this." The Franciscans, however, excogitated still higher favours, which provoked one of Chaucer's cruellest parodies.

<sup>1</sup> This, of course, was only later; the instance alleged cannot possibly be put before the year 1200.

<sup>2</sup> pp. 716 ff. He names 8 in Spain, 5 in Portugal, 2 in France, 1 each in Flanders and Luxemburg, 3 in Brabant, 4 in Alsace, 11 in Poland and adjoining provinces, 6 in Silesia, 1 in Moravia, 2 in Bohemia. Britain, of course, is not mentioned; but the omission of Italy, Austria and Bavaria is strange. The number of medieval miraculous statues of the Virgin was, of course, immensely greater than this; see S. Beissel, *Wallfahrten u.s.w.* 1913.

named were written by men who had great sympathy with other doctrines of the Roman Catholic church; and the reader will see that nearly all the most significant anecdotes told by Liguori in the middle of the eighteenth century were taken by him from orthodox medieval sources. The book might be quoted without anachronism among other witnesses from the Middle Ages.

For those sources themselves, we have valuable studies in modern books. E. Lucius exhausts the quite early evidence in the fourth book of his *Anfänge des Heiligenkultus* (1904). The Jesuit father S. Beissel has collected a mass of material, with very interesting pictures, in his *Gesch. d. Verehrung Marias in Deutschland w. d. Mittelalters* (1909); but, voluminous as this book is, its omissions are significant and, from the strictly scientific point of view, fatal. The medieval collections of Adgar, Botho and Pelbart are apparently not mentioned at all; Gautier de Coincy is casually cited a few times; the brief summaries which Beissel gives of other legends very often obscure their real significance for social and religious history.

From the more scientific and special point of view, the fullest studies known to me are those of A. Mussafia and E. Lommatzsch. The former is scattered through *Sitzungsberichte der K. Akademie in Wien (Phil.-Hist.)*, vols. 113, 115, 119 and 123; it deals mainly with the origin and the inter-relation of these numerous collections. The latter, published as a separate volume in 1913, deals with the satirical material in Gautier de Coincy. Gautier's actual text is so difficult of access that I have not attempted to deal with him exhaustively. I have read some of his tales for comparison; but, however great his literary merit, he seems to have little or no legendary matter which does not appear in earlier or later collections. Two such collections are easily accessible to English readers. The first is *The Golden Legend*, reprinted from Caxton's translation in seven volumes of the Temple Classics. Two of the most popular are repeated in chap. 37 (Purification of the B.V.M.), 3 in chap. 51 (Annunciation); 6 in chap. 119 (Assumption); 9 in chap. 131 (Nativity); 3 in the pseudo-Anselmian Sermon in chap. 189 (Conception). Others come in the Lives of SS. Thomas of Canterbury (chap. 11), Julian (chap. 30), James (chap. 99), Peter (chap. 110), Hippolytus (chap. 118) and Michael (chap. 145). The second is the E.E.T.S. *Alphabet of Tales*, which contains well-known Mary-legends on pp. 315-22. A considerable number of medieval Mary-legends have been translated into modern German by F. W. Genthe (*Die Jungfrau Maria u.s.w.*, Halle, 1857) and many, again, are repeated in St Alfonso Liguori's *Glories of Mary*, of which there are several English translations.

After enumerating those writers who deal only sporadically with Mary-legends, Mussafia begins his list with "Botho," which he proves to date from the end of the eleventh century, though Botho, the monk who compiled the ms. from which Pez printed, lived in the thirteenth century. Another collection almost contemporary, by the well-known William of Malmesbury, has never yet been printed, to the discredit

of English scholarship; it is found in a Salisbury Cathedral ms. (97 ff., 91 ff.) and Camb. Univ. (M.m. 6, 15 ff., 109 ff.). In the twelfth century we get larger collections; still larger, again, in the thirteenth; moreover, a glance at his conspectus on p. 962 shows the growing frequency of stories where peccant Religious and others escape the due penalty of their sins. By this time we find that brief collections are used for church-lessons during service in the Lady Chapel (976). There is now a collection called *Mariale Magnum*, from which later compilers quote. About 1230, Caesarius of Heisterbach devoted a whole section of his *Liber Miraculorum* to the Virgin Mary; many of these stories are of extreme interest, as coming from his own *entourage*, and hitherto untold; some of these attained at once to great and enduring popularity. Some twenty years later, Vincent of Beauvais told forty-three Mary-legends consecutively in his great encyclopedia (*Spec. Hist.* bk VII, ch. 81-120) with a good many more scattered up and down in other parts of the book. Several of these, again, are new. *The Golden Legend* naturally contains a large number, some of which are not in the twelfth century books, but recur over and over again in the vernacular rhymed collections which are so frequent in French, Anglo-French, and German during the thirteenth century. All the books of anecdotes for preachers, again, are full of these stories, seldom new. In the fifteenth century, the Dominican Johann Herolt wrote a *Promptuarium Miraculorum B.V.M.* and the Franciscan Pelbart of Temesvar a *Pomerium Sermonum de B. Virgine*. By this time the two or three hundred traditional legends rang the changes so completely over every possibility of human adventure that Razzi, at the end of the sixteenth century, has only one or two more recent anecdotes among his total of 182.

## B. Two main sources

The necessarily scattered references in my text may well be supplemented here by a more systematic analysis of the two most important sources—"Botho" and Caesarius. From these, the reader may form for himself a clearer idea of the religious mentality in first-rate monasteries at the time of greatest monastic prosperity and influence<sup>1</sup>. Those marked with an asterisk will be found fully translated in section C of this appendix.

### (a) "Botho."

(1) The B.V.M. gives to St Hildefonso a chasuble for his own exclusive use; his successor in the bishopric of Toledo ventures to wear it, and dies a horrible death. (2) An unchaste sacristan of an abbey is drowned; M. saves his soul\*. (3) A clerk at Chartres is buried in unconsecrated ground on account of sudden death without sacraments; M. commands that he should be honourably buried, as her servant. (4) A clerk is accustomed to sing the Five Joys of Mary; she stands by his deathbed and promises salvation. (5) So also to a poor man who

<sup>1</sup> Mussafia gives a list of "Botho's" stories on pp. 937 ff. of his first *Studie*.

gave alms in her name. (6) A thief is hanged; M. supports him with her hands, as a servant of hers. (7) An unchaste monk of St Peter's at Cologne; St Peter cannot save his soul from the devil, but M. does\*. (8) A monk of Cluny persuaded by the devil first to castrate himself and then to commit suicide; but Mary saves his soul. (9) A priest was so ignorant that he knew no Mass but that of the Virgin; the Bishop deprived him of his cure for incompetence, M. appeared in wrath and commanded that her servant should be reinstated. (10) M. raises an unjust judge from the dead in order to give him time for repentance. (11) She saves a greedy peasant who had stolen land from his neighbours, but who had frequently repeated the *Ave*. (12) The Prior of San Salvatore at Pavia was a man "of evil morals, and given to unrighteous acts"; M. similarly saved him at the Judgement Seat: "whence it may be inferred how great a hope we may conceive of escaping all peril, if we study to serve this most merciful Lady by saying regularly and devoutly her most sweet Hours." (13) At Pavia, again, she appeared and insisted on the election of her candidate to the vacant bishopric. (14) At the convent of St Michele at Chiusa, wine was once spilt at Mass upon the corporal; M. miraculously cleansed it. (15) The abbey-church at Mont St-Michel was burned down; yet her statue remained unhurt. (16) A cleric at Pisa, devoted to the B.V.M., was persuaded by his relations to marry; M. appeared to him on his wedding-day; that night he slipped away from his bride and wandered, no man knows whither, to serve M. in peace. (17) Merieldis, wife to Sir Roger Fitz-Wimund, near Fécamp, was big with child; she dreamed a dream which crazed her: "it seemed to her that the Christian faith, which she had held hitherto, lay between her breasts, and was now oozing forth again. Thus did the devil delude her, that he might catch her soul." They plunged her into "water which had been fortified by the frequent benedictions of many priests"; but this only increased her frenzy. Equally fruitless were her pilgrimages to many other saints' churches, and to one dedicated to the Holy Trinity. After a year of these sufferings, she was healed by Mary in a church dedicated to her.

This completes the first part of "Botho." The second contains 27 stories of a very similar type. Mary saves from damnation one drunken and two unchaste monks, an unchaste abbess, an unchaste nun, and an unworthy abbot who owed his election to secular favour; she heals a monk with a few drops of her milk; she comes between another devotee and the bride whom he has married. In these 44 stories, therefore, we have all the main outlines of the medieval Mary-legend. The only thing wanting as yet—and the thirteenth century will soon complete that—is the insistence on the mechanical conditions and almost microscopic amount of lip-service which will suffice, under fortunate conditions, to win salvation through Mary<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This is equally prominent in post-Reformation collections such as those of Razzi and St Alfonso Liguori: e.g. a sinner is saved by "some *Hail Marys* . . . repeated . . . without devotion, and half asleep" (*Glories of Mary*, p. 190—chap. viii, sect. 1).

(b) Caesarius. It will be simplest to translate his own chapter-headings (Distinctio vii):

(1) Those things which mystically designate the B.V.M., and the benefits she hath conferred upon mankind. (2) Her image which sweated for fear of God's judgement. (3) The plague in Friesland by reason of the insult to the Lord's Body. (4) The ignorant priest who, having been degraded by St Thomas of Canterbury, recovered his office through the B.V.M. (5) The ignorant priest of Derlar who was deposed, and to whom St M. commanded that his church should be restored. (6) The lord Pope Innocent [III], whom St M. rebuked through Rainiero [his confessor], when he would have imposed exactions upon the Cistercian Order. (7) Her vengeance on the enemies of [the convent of] Marienstatt. (8) Henry, Canon of St Cunibert, who was converted by intercession of St M. (9) The sick monk of La Trappe, for whom St M. obtained the grace of confession. (10) Two sick beggars in her hospital at Paris, whom she warned concerning confession. (11) Peter the One-Eyed, Abbot of Clairvaux, to whom she gave her blessing in the church at Speyer. (12) The monks and lay brethren at Himmerode whom she blessed at Matins, as Henry the lay brother saw. (13) Of Henry again, and other sick lay brethren whom she visited by night and blessed. (14) How she blessed certain sleeping monks, one only excepted, who lay inordinately. (15) How she and St Elizabeth and Mary Magdalene appeared to the said lay brother. (16) The life of dan Christian of Himmerode. (17) The sacristan of Loccum, who saw her one night sitting on the altar. (18) How a monk of Loccum saw her go round at Matins and uncover the faces of all the monks, with but two exceptions. (19) To another monk of that same house she appeared in the air above the altar, among a multitude of saints. (20) The visions of a noble virgin of Guildo. (21) How the nun Christina, on Assumption Day, saw her let down her crown over the convent of Petersthal. (22) Otto the provost of Xanten, cured of a double sickness by her prayers. (23) A cleric, whose tongue the Albigensian heretics had cut out, had it restored by her. (24) How Adam, monk of Loccum, was cured by her of a scabby head, and of her healing miracles at Montpellier, and her statue at Sardenay. (25) A lay brother freed from devilish vexations by the *Ave Maria*. (26) An anchoress by the same means escapes from diabolical illusions. (27) A lady, by that same salutation, escapes rape. (28) The chains of the knight Dietrich are broken by her merits. (29) She appeared to the priest of Polch and appeased his fear of the thunder. (30) The blessed Elizabeth of Schönau, at that versicle *Audi nos, etc.*, saw her bend her knees and pray for the convent. (31) How, at the versicle, *Ora Virgo*, she put bread into a certain clerk's mouth. (32) How, by a kiss from her mouth, she liberated a knight from the temptation of love for his master's wife. (33) How she smote on the cheek a nun who burned with love for a certain clerk, and cured her. (34) Concerning Beatrice [who left her convent and became a harlot, but the B.V.M. concealed her offence]. (35) How, in a vision, she comforted a knight who,

[having taken the cowl], was oppressed by our Matins. (36) Henry, cast forth from the monastery, was received again through her merits. (37) The wondrous visions of dan Bertram, a Cistercian monk of Lombardy. (38) The life of dan Walther v. Birbech. (39) How she was seen to give a pastoral staff unto our own Abbot before his election. (40) How Bishop Dietrich through her was made Archbishop of Cologne, and deposed at her will. (41) How, in a dream, she rebuked a scholar of Cologne because he was wont to speak ill of our Order. (42) The punishment of Sybodo and his fellows, by reason of their insults to her. (43) The punishment of the gambler who blasphemed her. (44) And of a lady of Veldenz who spake foolishly of her statue. (45) How another lady, through her, recovered her daughter from the wolf. (46) Her image at Essen. (47) The physician-monk, to whom she first refused her electuary in choir, and then gave it him when he had amended. (48) The nun whose hurt leg she anointed in a vision and healed. (49) How an anchorite, through the *Ave Maria*, felt a marvellous sweetness [so that all his saliva seemed turned to honey]. (50) How she kissed a monk on his deathbed. (51) How, when Hermann the lay brother was wearied, she sang the service for him and foretold his end. (52) The lay brother Pavo, who saw her at his last end. (53) How she appeared to a dying man. (54) How she succoured the monk Warner at his last end, when he was terrified by devils. (55) How she showed herself to a Canon of Cologne on his deathbed. (56) How she consoled Cono the crusader at his death. (57) How a beheaded knight escaped hell by her help. (58) How she commanded that a beheaded robber should be buried within the church [because in her honour he had fasted one day a week and robbed nobody on that day]. (59) How a monk saw the Order of Cîteaux nestling under her cloak in the Kingdom of Heaven.

### C. Two tales translated from "Botho"

(1) Ch. ii, p. 308: "There was in a certain convent a monk who held the office of Sacristan. He was very dissolute, and by the devil's instigation he burned sometimes in libidinous fires. Yet he had no small love for the Holy Mother of God; and, when he passed by her altar, he was wont to salute her reverently and say, *Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum*. Hard by that convent was a river, which this monk used to cross when he went forth to fulfil his lust. One night, therefore, wishing to go to his accustomed crime, he saluted St Mary, as was his wont, before her altar, unlocked the church doors, and came to the river aforesaid. But, when he would have crossed it, the devil thrust him into the water, where he was soon drowned. Then a multitude of demons seized upon his soul, hoping to bear it into the pit. But, by God's mercy, angels came to see whether they could bring him any solace; to whom the lying demons cried: 'Wherefore are ye come hither? Ye have no part in this soul; for he is rightly ours by reason of the evil deeds which he hath done.' Then were the holy angels sore grieved, having no sufficiency of good works to bring forward for him; when,

behold! the holy Mother of God was there, saying to those demons with commanding freedom of speech: 'Wherefore, most wicked of spirits, have ye seized upon this soul?' 'Because,' said they, 'we have found that he spent his life in ill-doing.' 'Nay,' replied she, 'but these are falsehoods that ye utter. For I know how, whithersoever he went forth, he obtained my leave by saluting me; and likewise on his return. If therefore ye plead that I do you injustice, behold! we will lay our cause at the feet of the King of All.' So they disputed of this matter; and the Lord of All decreed, for the merits of His most holy Mother, that the monk's soul should return unto his body in order that he might do penance for his crimes. Meanwhile the time came for the brethren's psalmody; and when the hour was come when the bell should have been rung, certain of them arose and sought this Sacristan and found him not; until they came to the river and found him drowned in the water. So they drew his body forth, and marvelled how this had befallen him. So, while they spake and disputed of this matter, behold! their brother arose marvellously from his death, and told his brethren of all that had befallen him, and how by God's Mother's help he had escaped. After this he not only quitted that vice wherein he was wont to delight, but served the Lord and his holy Mother Mary yet more fervently; and, finishing his course in good works, he gave up his soul in peace."

Ch. iii (p. 310) is similar; but here it is a secular cleric, who was "beyond all measure subject to fleshly desires," but who "very frequently saluted the blessed Virgin with the *Ave Maria*." So Ch. vi (p. 314) a robber who, "when he went forth to steal, was wont to pray and salute her most devoutly."

(2) Ch. vii, p. 316: "In St Peter's convent at Cologne there was a brother whose life and manners were far apart from his monastic habit. For, dealing loosely in many of his acts, he had even a son, contrary to his monastic vow, and had given himself up in many ways to worldly actions. This brother, having taken a draught one day with the rest for the health of his body, was seized with sickness and much afflicted, dying suddenly without confession or the holy communion of Christ's Body. Thereupon the fiend seized his body and bare it to the bars of hell. But St Peter, whose monk the man was, saw this and came to the merciful Lord, praying for his brother's soul. Then said the Lord: 'Knowest thou not, Peter, how David by my inspiration said, "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, and who shall rest upon thy holy hill?"' and how he added, "He that leadeth an uncorrupt life,"' etc. At these words St Peter again besought the holy angels, and then every order of saints, to pray for this brother's soul. But to each, in turn, the Lord made answer as before. At last he came to the holy Mother of God and the other holy virgins, knowing that their prayers are soonest heard. Wherefore, when the holy Mother of God had arisen with the holy virgins to plead with her Son, Christ arose forthwith to meet them, saying to His holy Mother and to the rest: 'What askest thou of me, sweetest Mother, with these my dearest sisters?' When therefore



the holy Virgin had answered that she would fain plead for that brother's soul, then said the Saviour of the World: 'Albeit that I said through David that no man might dwell in my tabernacle but he that leadeth an uncorrupt life; yet, since it is thy good pleasure that he should have mercy, I grant that his soul may return to the body in order that he may do penance for his ill deeds, and may thus at last enjoy rest.' When the holy Mother of God had told this unto St Peter, then St Peter threatened the devil with a great key which he held in his hand, and put him suddenly to flight, and seized the soul of that brother which he held. Which soul he commended to two comely boys, who commended him in turn to a certain brother who had lived in the convent aforesaid, that he might bring him back to the living. This brother prayed him, as a guerdon for his service, that he would daily say a *Miserere* for him, and often sweep his tombstone. . . Now, if this miracle which we have here told seem incredible to any man, let him consider what power the holy Mother of God, above all orders of saints, hath with her Son that is King and Lord of heaven and earth; and then let him cease from all wavering of unbelief. But if he object concerning this, that St Peter drove off the fiend in terror with his key, let him remember that incorporeal things cannot be told to corporeal beings but through bodily images. Yet is nothing impossible with the Lord, to whom is glory and blessing for ever and ever. Amen."

## D. Two other characteristic stories

I insert them here, because they do not occur in the earlier collections. The first is given by Herolt (*Promptuarium*, No. 49): "A certain young and worldly-minded knight had a wife dearly devoted to the B.V.M., to whom she prayed long and fervently for her husband's conversion. One night, lo! the knight was rapt in the spirit to God's judgement-seat, where he was accused and convicted of all his misdeeds. When therefore all had abandoned him, the Judge asked, 'Is there here any saint whom this man hath ever honoured?' The B.V.M. answered, 'O Lord, once he gave a great wax candle in reverence to me; let him find mercy, I pray thee, for this cause.' Then the Judge answered her, 'For thy prayers, I grant that he may defend himself as best he can with this candle.' When therefore the demons would have carried him off, he burned them with his candle and defended himself manfully against them; but for fear and anguish he sweated sore as he lay in bed, and howled so pitifully that his wife awoke. At dawn, when she came unto him, she found his skin as rough as the bark of a tree, and his hair long and white and stiff, and a flowing beard; and, suspecting some adulterer, she cried aloud, so that his servants flew to their arms. Then he awoke and could not speak, but bellowed terribly like an ox; and most surely they would have slain him, but that he was able to give them a certain countersign of his person. At length he recovered his reason somewhat and told them all his story," and became a new man.

(2) Mary and the Blind Clerk. From C. Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden* (Neue Folge, 1881, p. 499) from the Auchinleck ms. about 1310. It owes its preservation to the fortunate chance that the beginning of another treatise came on the other side of the leaf; the first part of this English legend, (doubtless, with many more Mary-miracles) has been torn out of the ms. on account of its subject. I supply the first part of the legend from the Latin of Herolt and Pelbart.

[A certain clerk of Paris, much devoted to the most blessed Virgin, long desired and burned to see her beauty. After many days, an angel of the Lord, sent by Mary, saluted the clerk, and said unto him:—]

[here begins the English]

An angel she sent to him anon.	
He gret the clerk with mildē steven	[voice
Into the chamber when he had gone	
He was brighter than any leven,	[lightning
Leven nor no sunnēs beam	
In summer's day was never so bright	
Than that angel when he down came	
Into that house about midnight	
He thought his heartē should to-spring	
When he gan on that angel seen	
"My clerkē, dreadē thee nothing,	
Grace of God be us between!	
Tidings now do I thee bring	
From Mary, our heaven-queen;	
I thee tell certain tiding:	
If thou wilt her body seen,	
If see thou wilt that lady bright	
This penance thou mustē choose,	
Thou might be sicker, thine eye-sight	[sure
Or thy life thou shalt for-lose."	
The clerk anon gan him bethink:	
"Yet I can another crook	
With mine one eyē I shall wink	
And with mine other I shall look,	
My livelihood I shall beswink	[work for
If I may see upon a book,	
And have enowē meat and drink" <sup>1</sup> .	
Good comfort to himself he took.	
He took to him anon good heed:	
"Iwis, myne one eye may me serve	
There to do with all my deed;	
It is enough, till I shall sterve."	[die

<sup>1</sup> This is clearer in the Latin: the angel said, "if you lose your sight, how will you earn your livelihood by writing? you will become a beggar." He reflected that, by shutting one eye, he could keep enough sight to avoid actual beggary.

The clerk him answered fair again:

"I do me all in her meinay:

[service

Shewē now what I shall mean

To Mary, as I to thee say.

Her serviant I have long been.

With all lovē now I her pray

That I might her oncē seen

Apertly, ere my dying-day.

When I die, she give me grace

To come to her with good intent,

To see her bodie and her face."

The angel again to heaven is went.

From heaven into the clerkēs bower

Right down before his beddēs feet,

The angel alight with great honour,

And well fair he gan him greet.

"Mary, that bare our Saviour,"

He said, "thou now shalt see as sket."

[quickly

With him there came a great odour,

Was never no smell half so sweet.

So sweet a smell was never none

Of rose nor of no spicerie

As came into that lovely wone

[dwelling

Before that lovely company.

With angels' song and merry play

Our lady now adown she light

Into the chamber where he lay,

And saidē "Clerk, dread thee no whit!"

Though a man bethought him aye

Not should he reden ever aright

Hennēs unto Domēsday

[hence

How fair she is, that maiden bright.

How bright she is no tongue may tell,

Y-blessed may she ever been!

Of heaven, of earth and of hell

She is the emperess and queen.

A mantle our lady unfeld,

[unfolded

Brighter than sun that shineth sheer.

"Clerk, dread thee nought, but be now beld

[bold

For thou shalt havē thy desire;

The while thou hast thine eyne in weld

[possession

Advise thee well of mine attire,

Apertly thou me beheld

Body and face and breast and swire"

[neck

Swire and all her body he seye  
When she haddē to him spoken:  
He looked on her with his one eye—  
That other he held still y-locken.

[saw

Again to heaven our lady went  
Well stilly out of that close.  
The clerkē held him foully shent;  
A-morrow, when that he arose  
His yellow hair he hath all to-rent  
And in his heart sore him agros.  
All thus he said, and him by-meant,  
“This night I saved one of my foes;  
My foe I spared, alas that while!  
Sorry I am, and well I owe  
Mine eyē doth my soulē guile  
And often bringeth it full low.”

[horrified

Right in his chamber there he stood  
Him thought his life was him full loath.  
He weptē sore with dreary mood  
And out of his chamber he goeth.  
“That me not deigned, I was wood  
To lookē with mine eyēs both  
Upon that lady fair and good;  
I wot therefore that she is wroth.  
Wroth she is, and well she may,  
With me, that am sinful caitiff,  
That I should her so betray,  
That I have loved in all my life.

[mad

“Ever me may rue that each while,  
That I should for any dread  
Do Mary that greatē guile.  
Alas, what shall me to-rede?  
My soul I brought in great peril.  
Ah, lady, for thy maidenhead!  
Forgivē me my sinnēs vile,  
And help me in this muckle need!  
In this needē thou me save,  
That I not be never forlorn;  
Grantē me that I thee crave,  
For His love that of thee was born.

“Ah, lady, to me thou lithe  
For care mine heart will to-rive;  
Mickle love I shall thee kythe  
And worship thine joyēs five.

[gracious

[make known

Lend me grace, another sithe  
 To see thy bodie withouten strife;  
 Be [it] so, I shall be blithe  
 To be blind in all my life.  
 In all my life I shall be glad  
 In such penance for to be,  
 Be so thou grant that I thee bade:  
 Eftsoonis I might thee see.” [time

All day he was in sorrow strong;  
 And afterward that come the night,  
 His whitē handēs hard he wrung,  
 He may not for woe sleep no whit.  
 He heardē then a merry song  
 Of angels that were so bright;  
 Our lady, she came there among  
 And saidē: “Clerkē, dread thee nought!”  
 She spake the clerk so fair until:  
 “I forgive thee all thy guilt;  
 Thy prayer I shall fulfil:  
 Look on me, if that thou wilt!

“The while that thou art hale and quert [sound  
 Behold me well, every a bone!  
 Bethink in thine ownē heart  
 That warison not hast thou none; [protection  
 Thine asking sorē shall thee smart,  
 If thou be blind as any stone;  
 Thou mustē live in great povertē,  
 When thou hast thine eyes foregone.  
 When thou foregoest thy worldēs weal  
 And love of friends, fremd and sibbe [strangers and kinsfolk  
 Anguish thou must suffer fele [much  
 In all the time that thou shalt live.”

The clerk answered, and lough: [laughed  
 “Mine heart is full of great solace;  
 I am more blythe than bird on bough,  
 That I have seen thine holy face;  
 Of all joy I have enough,  
 Lend me now, lady, of thy grace!—  
 To suffer woe my body is tough,  
 Be so I may haven a place:  
 A placē grantē me, Marie,  
 That my soulē motē wone, [dwell  
 With joyē and with melodie,  
 In heaven before thy sweetē son!”

She said: "My clerk, now weep thou nought,  
 Nor makē nonē mourning cheer!  
 Thy boon, thou hastē me besought,  
 I grantē thee in all manere:  
 Into that joy thou shalt be brought,  
 When thou hast leften thy life here,  
 That my sweetē Son hath wrought  
 To them that be Him lief and dear.  
 Dear thou art to me, iwis,  
 Again to heaven now I must wend;  
 And thou shalt come into that bliss,  
 When thou hast left thy livē's end."

Up into Heaven anon she stye, [rose  
 There she is queen and lady corn. [chosen  
 The clerk his eyen fast he wrye,  
 He weened his sightē were forlorn.  
 When it was day, full well he seye [saw  
 This worldēs pride all him beforene.  
 "Mercy, lady!" he cried on high,  
 "Well be the time that thou wert born!  
 That thou wert born of a woman,  
 Blessed be ever the day!  
 There liveth no wight that tell can  
 The joy that of thee springeth aye."

Lady, flower and fruit of Iesse, [gracious  
 Thou art maiden good and hende  
 Goddēs mother, mild and free;  
 Mickle thou helpest all mankind:  
 On thy servant have pitie,  
 And save us, Lordē, from the fiend,  
 And grant us, if thy will it be,  
 When we shall out of this world wend,  
 When we shall wend out of this live,  
 Hear our prayer and our steven:  
 Bring us, for thy joyēs five,  
 Into the sweetē bliss of heaven. *Amen.*

### E. Mary and the cannibal

From pp. 83 ff. of *Miracles of the B.V.M.* ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (London, 1900).

This story, the knowledge of which I owe to Prof. F. C. Burkitt, is from an Ethiopian collection of which Lady Meux possessed two MSS. The first was written for King David, probably a little before 1500 A.D., to be presented to some monastery or great church for lectionary purposes (Introd. pp. ii, xvi). This collection of miracles has an official character (p. iii): "it is probably canonical, and at least it was considered

to embrace all the most important of the Miracles of the B.V.M., accounts of which were preserved by the Ethiopian Church...The selection, once fixed, was perpetuated by the scribes; and the artists, having in the first case copied European illustrations, continued to reproduce them to the best of their ability, the modifications which crept into them being the result of incapacity and carelessness rather than a desire for variety." The second MS. dates from about 1775, and "the pictures in the MS. are most interesting from a comparative point of view, because they enable us to note the modifications in the method of treatment which have crept in between the periods in which the earlier and the later MSS. were written. They prove, too, that there was a traditional manner of illustrating the Miracles of the Virgin, and also that the artist considered himself free to make small modifications which did not interfere with the *motif* of the old design." "The narratives of the Miracles exhibit Western influence and treatment to a remarkable degree" (xxviii). "As time went on, manuscript copies of such [Western] 'collections' were carried into the East and were translated into Arabic, and, probably by way of Egypt, they entered Ethiopia, where they were received joyfully" (xxix).

The miracle here printed will be recognized as an exaggeration of the most exaggerated type of Western Mary-legends; those had seemed already to reduce the principle *ad absurdum*, but the Ethiopians reduced it *ad absurdissimum*.

## Chapter XXIX

### The Virgin and the Cannibal of the City of Këmer

A Miracle of our holy Lady, the twofold Virgin Mary, who gave birth to God. May her prayer and her blessing, and the mercy of her beloved Son be with our king David for ever and ever! Amen.

Now there was a certain man in the city of Këmer, and he was of noble race and was, in name, a Christian. And his sin was very great, and indeed, it exceeded that of all other men, for he did not eat [ordinary] food and the flesh of oxen, but he lived upon human flesh. Now when this cannibal had devoured eight and seventy people, his friends, and his acquaintances, and his kinsfolk, and the people who were in his service began to come to an end, and the men who remained fled from him so that he might not be able to devour them; and he was left alone with his wife and two children, and them also he ate. And it came to pass one day as he was walking along that he found a certain husbandman on the road, and he lay in wait for him and followed him; and when he knew that he would be too strong for him he left him and departed. . . Then the cannibal spake unto him a second time and said, "I will give thee, in addition, arrows" but the husbandman refused [to accept them] And again the cannibal said unto him, "Shew me, I pray, thy cave wherein thou dwellest." Then the husbandman said unto him, "Behold [it] close by thee. Dost not thou thyself dwell in the habitations of men?" And he refused [to shew him his dwelling], and departed. Then again the husbandman said unto him, "Thou art



(a) His crime



(b) His salvation

THE CANNIBAL OF KĒMER





of noble family, but thy heart is depraved, and full of guile, and thou appearest to be like unto a rich man who hath his abode in the city of Këmer." And the cannibal said unto him, "Why dost thou compare me with such an one, O my brother?"

Then the cannibal took some water in a vessel, and as he was going along the road he found a certain poor beggar whose whole body was covered with the sores and scabs of leprosy; and he wished he could eat the poor man, but he did not like him because of his sores which were putrefying and which stank exceedingly. Now the beggar was thirsty, and he begged some water from the cannibal, and said unto him, "Give me some water to drink, for God's sake"; but the cannibal became greatly enraged, and heaped abuse upon him. Then the beggar begged again for water from him for the sake of heaven and earth, and for the sake of the martyrs and the righteous men; and the cannibal refused [to give him any]. And the beggar begged from him a third time, and said unto him, "In the name of Mary, give me water to drink before my soul depart." Then the cannibal said unto him, "Verily, from my youth up, I have heard that she saveth [men] by her prayers, therefore I myself will take refuge in her." And he said to the beggar, "Take, and drink, for Mary's sake"; but when only a little water had gone down his throat, that is to say about a handful, the cannibal seized him and stopped him from drinking before he was able to satisfy his thirst. Then the cannibal died, and the angel of darkness took his soul, and cast it into Sheol. And our holy Lady, the Virgin Mary, who gave birth to God, came unto the Son of God and said, "Have compassion upon me, O my Son." And He said unto her, "What good thing hath he done for thee?" And she said unto him, "He gave a thirsty man water to drink in my name." Then the Lord said, "Bring forth the scales and weigh the souls which he hath devoured against the water which he gave the thirsty man to drink"; and they weighed them, and the little drop of water outweighed the eight and seventy souls. And the angels of light who were looking on marvelled, and they gave shouts of joy because the cannibal had been saved and was made to live through the entreaty of our holy Lady, the twofold Virgin Mary, who gave birth to God, through Whom all things come to pass. May her prayer, and her blessing and the mercy of her beloved Son be with our king David for ever and ever! Amen.

Thy love did save the evil-doing cannibal  
Because the handful of water [given to] the beggar stood on his side  
Vain and useless beneath the heavens are all things.  
What can benefit the children of men  
Without thy love, O Mary, thou Pearl?

## F. Marienkind

This tale, taken down from oral tradition by the brothers Grimm, shows how the naïve medieval conception of Mary's power even over the Trinity has lasted in the popular mind down to modern times. It

is the third of their *Kinder- und Hausmärchen*; the translation here given is Bohn's (1, 7).

*Our Lady's Child*

Hard by a great forest dwelt a wood-cutter with his wife, who had an only child, a little girl of three years old. They were, however, so poor that they no longer had daily bread, and did not know how to get food for her. One morning the wood-cutter went out sorrowfully to his work in the forest, and while he was cutting wood, suddenly there stood before him a tall and beautiful woman with a crown of shining stars on her head, who said to him, "I am the Virgin Mary, mother of the child Jesus. Thou art poor and needy, bring thy child to me, I will take her with me, and be her mother and care for her." The wood-cutter obeyed, brought his child, and gave her to the Virgin Mary, who took her up to heaven with her. There the child fared well, ate sugar-cakes, and drank sweet milk, and her clothes were of gold and the little angels played with her. And when she was fourteen years of age, the Virgin Mary called her one day and said, "Dear child, I am about to make a long journey, so take into thy keeping the keys of the thirteen doors of heaven. Twelve of these thou mayest open, and behold the glory which is within them, but the thirteenth, to which this little key belongs, is forbidden thee. Beware of opening it, or thou wilt bring misery on thyself." The girl promised to be obedient, and when the Virgin Mary was gone, she began to examine the dwellings of the kingdom of heaven. Each day she opened one of them, until she had made the round of the twelve. In each of them sat one of the Apostles in the midst of a great light, and she rejoiced in all the magnificence and splendour, and the little angels who always accompanied her rejoiced with her. Then the forbidden door alone remained, and she felt a great desire to know what could be hidden behind it, and said to the angels, "I will not quite open it, and I will not go inside it, but I will unlock so that we can just see a little through the opening." "Oh, no," said the little angels, "that would be a sin. The Virgin Mary has forbidden it, and it might easily cause thy unhappiness." Then she was silent, but the desire in her heart was not stilled, but gnawed there and tormented her, and let her have no rest. And once when the angels had all gone out, she thought, "Now I am quite alone, and I could peep in. If I do it, no one will ever know." She sought out the key, and when she had got it in her hand, she put it in the lock, and when she had put it in she turned it round as well. Then the door sprang open, and she saw there the Trinity sitting in fire and splendour. She stayed there awhile, and looked at everything in amazement; then she touched the light a little with her finger, and her finger became quite golden. Immediately a great fear fell on her. She shut the door violently, and ran away. Her terror too would not quit her, let her do what she might, and her heart beat continually and would not be still; the gold too stayed on her finger, and would not go away, let her wash it and rub it never so much. [Mary, of course, discovers her guilt and expels her from heaven.]

## B. PEZII PRAEFATIO

Domnus Bernardus Pezium, vir eruditissimus et monachus Mellicensis, inter multa alia quae ex antiquis schedulis prelo commisit religiosas cujusdam virginis vitam et revelationes publici juris fecit, sub hoc titulo: *Venerabilis Agnetis Blannbekin Vita et Revelationes*, MDCCXXXI.

Libellus ille, quamvis auctoritate trium censorum munitus prodiisset (inter quos abbas Mellicensis, qui non insigni illi monasterio solum, sed et universae congregationi Mellicensi praeerat), mox tamen revocatus est, et in tantum exstirpatus, ut vix duodecim exemplaria hodie superesse noscantur<sup>1</sup> (A. Mussafia, *Sitzungsberichte d. k. Akad. d. Wissenschaften Phil.-Hist.* vol. CXIII, MDCCCLXXXVI, p. 937). Cujus exstirpationis hoc in causa fuit, quod editor doctissimus periculosam quandam piae virginis revelationem non solum non omiserat sed etiam in praefatione sua disseverando manifestius patefecerat.

Hujus rei primus, ut puto, mentionem fecit Guibertus, S. Mariae de Novigento abbas, qui anno 1110 claruit. Is in tractatu suo *De Pignoribus Sanctorum* (lib. II, c. i, § 1) sic scribit: "nec desunt alii qui umbilici superfluum quod super natis absconditur, sunt qui circumcisi praeputium ipsius Domini se habere asserunt" (cf. lib. III, c. i, § 3, una cum doctissimi editoris nota, P.L. vol. 156, col. 1043).

Copiosissime hac de re disserit Bollandus in *Actis Sanctorum* (Jan. tom. I, pp. 3 sq.) cujus initium verbotenus hic reddere convenit, reliqua vero brevis. "Quinque ferme saeculis sacrosanctum Christi praeputium inter alias illustres Sanctorum reliquias apud se asservatum gloriantur Antwerpienses: quod tamen sub annum 1566 templis ac sacrariis immani Calvinistarum furore direptis deperditum est. Quoniam vero et aliae Ecclesiae illud apud se existere contendunt, proferam quae de eo varii auctores tradidere: judicium de re tota Lectori relinquam. Neque id novum est plures Ecclesias de illustribus aliquibus reliquiis certare, ut patebit ex Sanctorum historiis, cum saepe aliae pro aliis illustrioribus aut datae Principibus, aut suppositae; et hae tamen magna fide a piis hominibus cultae multorum miraculorum occasionem prae-buerint. Quod vero controversitur a quibusdam an Christus cum praeputio resurrexerit (de quo consuli possunt Titus Bostrensis et Theophylactus in caput 2 Lucae, et alii Interpretes ac Doctores,) id ita exponit Franciscus Suares noster 3 part. quaestion. 54, articul. 4, disput. 37, sect. 1, ut cum praeputium quidem resurrexisse Christum fateatur, fidem tamen traditioni asserenti id in terris quoque asservari non derogat. Nam quod resectum est, censet probabile esse in terris mansisse; corpus tamen resurgens habuisse praeputium formatum ex aliqua parte materiae illius, quae aliquando fuerat in corpore Christi et per continuum erat nutritionem resoluta. Quo vero loco pellicula illa, a sanctissimo Christi corpore praecisa, nunc asservetur, non satis constat. Innocentius III, lib. IV, de Missae Mysteriis cap. 30, 'Quid de

<sup>1</sup> Exstat exemplar in bibliotheca Musaei Britannici, sub signo 4886, bbb. 11.

circumcisione praeputii, vel umbilici praecisione dicitur? an in resurrectione Christi similiter rediit ad veritatem humanae substantiae? Creditur enim in Lateranensi basilica reservari: licet a quibusdam dicatur, quod praeputium Christi fuit in Jerusalem delatum ab Angelo Carolo Magno, qui transtulit illud, et posuit Aquisgrani [*Aachen*]. Sed post a Carolo Calvo positum est in Ecclesia Salvatoris apud Carosium [*Charroux*]. Melius est tamen Deo totum committere, quam aliquid temere definire.' Jacobus de Voragine in Legenda Aurea, in festo Circumcisionis: 'De carne autem circumcisionis Domini dicitur, quod Angelus eam Carolo Magno attulit; et ipse eam Aquisgrani in ecclesia S. Mariae honorifice collocavit: Carolus vero illam postea fertur Carosium transtulisse. Nunc autem dicitur esse Romae in Ecclesia, quae dicitur Sancta Sanctorum. Unde et ibidem scriptum legitur: Circumcisa caro Christi, sandalia clara, Ac [*Necnon?*] umbilici viget hic praecisio cara. Unde et ea die fit Statio ad Sancta Sanctorum.' Eadem habet Petrus de Natalib., lib. II, cap. 27.<sup>3</sup>

Hucusque propriis verbis Bollandus; reliquum breviter referre libet, notas ejus marginales tantum transcribendo, quibus nonnulla sancta praeputia alias quam in basilica Lateranensi asservata enumerat: "Anicii [*le Puy*] fertur etiam servari, uti et mitra Aaronis. Deipara Virgo Christi praeputium servavit: deinde S. Joanni dedit; cum sanguine a vulneribus Christi absterso. Ea post Romae asservata. Praeputium Christi putat Salmeron a D. Virgine Magdalenae donatum. Corrosium [*sic, Charroux*] monasterium. Oratorium S. Laurentii in Ecclesia Lateranensi; isthic umbilicus et praeputium Christi asservata; calcamenta Christi; caput S. Agnetis. Praeputium Christi, cum aliis reliquiis sublatum, in terram defodit miles; moribundus id indicat. Tandem multo post reperiuntur. Magdalenae Strocioe [*Strozzi*] conati sacculum, in quo erat Christi praeputium, aperire, tertio obrigescunt digiti. Suavissimus odor afflatur ex eo fasciculo. Solvitur fasciculus ille a Clarice virgine. Biduo haeret in ejus manibus suavis odor. Asservantur dictae reliquiae in Calcatae templo [*prope Romam*]. Supplicatio ad sacrum praeputium Kalendis Januariis. Expositis reliquiis nubes aliaque portenta in templo cernuntur; pulsatis campanis multi conveniunt; res Paulo IV Pontifici exponitur. Canonicus quidam Lateranensis praeputium Christi comprimens, illud divellit: moxque horrida tempestas oritur. Multa isthic miracula fiunt. Indulgentiae conceduntur a Pontifice. Praeputium Christi, aut certe ejus pars, Antverpiae asservata. Litterae Capituli Antverpiensis; postea nova hic sedes Episcopalis erecta. Praeputium Christi Hierosolymis Antverpiam transmittitur. Tres sanguinis guttulae e praeputio exsudent in corporali Episcopi Cameracensis, qui de veritate dubitare videbatur. Regina Siciliae Christi praeputium visitare vovens ab incurabili morbo curatur. Daemoniacus praeputio praesente liberatur. Regina Siciliae ornamenta dat Ecclesiae Antverpiensi. Litterae Joannis de Gaure Episcopi Cameracensis; Joannes Episcopus Indulgentias in capella sancti praeputii concedit. Litterae Theobaldi de Rubeomonte Archiepiscopi Vesuntionensis; omnibus Sabbatis solet fieri Missa de sancto praeputio; Theobaldus concedit Indulgentias

audientibus Missam, aut visitantibus capellam sancti praeputii etc. Litterae Eugenii IV Papae; Eugenius concedit sodalibus sancti praeputii ut possint sibi Confessarios eligere; utque ab iis semel plenariam indulgentiam consequantur; si ea fiducia peccent liberius, statuit ut non prosit illis bulla pro istis peccatis; tenentur sodales jejunare anno uno omnibus sextis feriis. Litterae Clementis VIII; Pontifex plenariam indulgentiam concedit sodalibus Circumcisionis in die ingressus, et mortis; item omnibus visitantibus eorum capellam festo Circumcisionis; concedit sodalibus alias indulgentias festis SS. Arnulphi, Beggae, Gertrudis, Ivonis; alia quoque pia opera exercentibus." Hucusque notae Bollandianae, quae lectori curioso indicare possint quot ecclesiae praeputium sibi vindicare solerent, quantaque Romanorum pontificum auctoritate suffultae.

In dies nostras usque credulitatem istam supervixisse testatur epistola quaedam exemplari Musaeo-Britannico inserta, (4886, bbb. 11) a J.-Ph. Sergeau ad amicum J. B. Inglis anno MDCCCLXII scripta: "Cum in Gallia hodie acerrime disceptetur de pignore illo singulari, cuius Innocentius papa III in libro *De Sacrificio Missae* mentionem facit, certior fieri cupio si talem librum inter codices tuos habeas. Nempe Episcopus Pictavensis, qui nunc est, praeputium Domini Nostri Jesu Christi devotioni subditorum suorum commendat, quod jam per longa saecula in ecclesia Carrosiensi [*de Charroux*] venerationi expositum etiam hodie ibidem colunt fideles. Cras hac de re te conveniam."

Redeamus tandem ad Pezium nostrum, qui capite xxxviii Vitae praenominatae hoc de venerabili Agnete testimonium, nihil mutato neque omisso, prelo commisit: "Ista persona [sc. Venerabilis Agnes] solita erat quasi a juventute semper in die Circumcisionis anxie deflere ex magna cordis compassione effusionem sanguinis Jesu Christi, quem sic tempestive initio suae infantiae effundere dignatus est... Sic quoque compatiens et flens coepit cogitare de praeputio Domini, ubi esset. Et ecce mox sensit super linguam suam parvam pelliculam ad modum pelliculae ovi cum permaxima dulcedine, quam deglutivit. Quam cum deglutisset, iterum pelliculam sensit in lingua cum dulcedine, uti prius, quam iterum deglutivit. Et hoc accidit ei bene centum vicibus. Et, cum toties sentiret, tentata est digito eam attingere. Quod cum vellet facere, illa pellicula de se in gutture descendit. Et dictum est ei, quod praeputium cum domino surrexit in die Resurrectionis. Tanta fuit dulcedo in degustatione hujus pelliculae, quod in omnibus membris et membrorum articulis sensit dulcem immutationem. In ista revelatione fuit tota interius plena lumine, ita ut se ipsam totam conspiceret."

Item in praefatione sua de hac re Pezium his verbis disserit: "Caput 38, in quo Agneti divinitus dictum refertur, *praeputium cum Domino surrexisse in die resurrectionis*, haud dubie nonnullos movebit, qui locum illum ex lib. VI, cap. 112, *Revelationum S. Birgittae* cum isthoc nostro attentius conferent. Ibi enim Sanctissima Deipara de praeputio Filii sui in hunc modum disserit: *Cum Filius meus circumcideretur, ego membranam illam in maximo honore servabam, ubi ibam. Quomodo enim ego illam traderem terrae, quae de me sine peccato fuerat generata? Cum*

*tempus vocationis meae de hoc Mundo instaret, ego ipsam commendavi Sancto Johanni custodi meo cum sanguine illo benedicto, qui remansit in vulneribus ejus, quando deposuimus eum de cruce. Post hoc, Sancto Johanne et successoribus ejus sublati de Mundo, crescente malitia et perfidia, fideles, qui tunc erant, absconderunt illa in loco mundissimo sub terra, et diu fuerunt incognita, donec Angelus Dei illa amicis Dei revelavit. O Roma, o Roma! Si scires, gauderes utique: immo si scires flere, fleres incessanter, quia habes thesaurum mihi charissimum, et non honoras illum.* Hactenus revelatio S. Birgittae de praeputio Xti coelitus facta, quae sane longissime ab ea, quae nostrae *Agneti* de eadem re obtigit, abludere videtur. Sed ut reponamus hic Virorum doctorum et Criticorum gladium, quo hujusmodi nodi Gordii nullo negotio secantur, si dicatur ex privatis piorum hominum visionibus controversas has facti, et minime necessarias, quaestiones decidi non posse, ac in illis plerumque regnare species ac imagines rerum, quibus antea piaae animae imbutae fuerunt—ut, inquam, reponamus nunc ista, videntur hae duae nostrae de praeputio Domini in speciem pugnantes revelationes ita conciliari posse, si, quod apud *Agnetem* de resurrectione praeputii interna vox nuntiat, de una aliqua solummodo parte praeputii: Quod vero apud S. Birgittam Divina Mater de ejusdem praeputii in terris adervatione asserit, de reliqua eaque forte majori Dominici praeputii parte accipiat. Certe si *Franciscus Suarez* apud *Bollandianos Tom. I, Act. SS. p. 4*, probabile censet, id, quod in circumcisione Domini relictum est, in terris mansisse, corpus tamen resurgens *habuisse praeputium formatum ex aliqua parte materiae illius, quae aliquando fuerat in corpore Christi, et per continuam erat nutritionem resoluta*: Cur non idem potius et commodius dicatur de aliqua parte Dominici praeputii, in terris adempti, quae Divina virtute in resurrectione ita tenderetur formareturque, uti gloriosi corporis integritati (si tamen huic necessarium est praeputium) congrueret, ad eum fere modum, quo salva in omnibus Catholica fide de resurrectione ejusdem humanae carnis, parvulorum etiam corpora *in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Xti, id est, in statura hominis annos circiter XXXIV nati, occursura* esse Ecclesiarum tenet traditio teste *Hieronymo* apud *Eruditissimum Augustinum Calmetum* e Benedictina congregatione S. Vitonis, *Tomo VIII, Comment. Litteral. in Divinas Scripturas p. 440*? Vide de his plura apud laudatos Bollandianos. Universim hic observaverim, dum hujusmodi Sanctorum virorum ac mulierum visiones et revelationes privatae in publicam lucem efferuntur, nullius fidei jugum imponi, sed omnia isthaec, donec aliud universali Ecclesiae visum fuerit, Divini Apostoli lege ac regula concludi: *Omnia probate: quod bonum est, tenete*. Caeterum omnia hujusmodi sine discrimine explodere, inter languentium mulierum somnia et commenta deputare, ad criticum unguem et humanae duntaxat prudentiae leges singulos apices revocare, sane non nisi hominis frigidi, Divinam erga humanum genus bonitatem ignorantis, et carnali sapientia stolidae ferocientis esse puto.”

## 2 I

## AMERICAN MEDIEVALISTS

Those who most believe in modern progress, and are most convinced of the great future that lies before the New World, are most bound to speak plainly where they find, in their own particular field, a tendency to attack the great social problems by the way of superficial and inaccurate generalizations. No European medievalist is likely to forget the debt that we all owe to Dr H. C. Lea's enormous industry and general accuracy; his books are indispensable to all serious students of medieval society. Admirable, again, are many briefer monographs, and bibliographical works, and books on legal or constitutional history; but in social or religious history Dr Lea seems to have found no worthy successor; those who have generalized most freely seem to have spent least labour on their foundations. The temptation of the Old World is to overlook new things; the New World is tempted to content itself with cheap and superficial judgements on the old. It is difficult to criticize freely, without unjust emphasis, books like the late Henry Adams's *Mont St-Michel and Chartres*, or Mr H. Osborne Taylor's *The Medieval Mind*, or Mr Ralph Adams Cram's *The Gothic Quest*. An American's worst temptation in medieval history is that of the globe-trotter; he comes, and sees, and marks many things superficially notable, with others that are less obvious, and others again which are chiefly notable under the forms in which he hastily misconceives them; and the result, in the hands of a man of real ability, is a curious medley of valuable and worthless matter. Mr Adams is the ablest of the three; but his elaboration of style and his rather pretentious allusiveness often cover a somewhat superficial knowledge of original sources. Mr Taylor has evidently read most of the up-to-date modern monographs; and his compilation, though wanting in constructive synthesis, may often be of great help to the medieval student, especially as a guide to farther reading. In a matter like that of Abailard and Héloïse, where the documents are few and have often been translated, Mr Taylor shows clear common-sense and a judicial spirit: it would be difficult to find the subject better treated anywhere else in so small a compass. But, as a rule, he does not really know his original sources; he evidently reads Latin with much difficulty, and a large number of his translations are simply ludicrous: he is capable of making *umbra praecurrentia* agree together, and translating "the fore-running shade"! No student can pretend to speak with authority on medieval life unless he is ready to spend a good many years in reading the actual documents in their original Latin. Mr Cram, to do him justice, makes no such pretensions; he is an architect and not a scholar; and he does little more than embroider upon well-known theses from Ruskin and Morris and Huysmans. But the time has come when the public has a right to know more about the real Middle Ages than Ruskin or Morris had time to



work out; and Huysmans's learning, as even his admirers now confess, is mainly pretence.

## 22

## THE GOD OF JUSTICE

(a) Three tales which are told for the instruction of his novices by Caesarius of Heisterbach—who, after all, stands definitely above the ordinary monastic average in learning and sense—may illustrate the danger of judging medieval religion exclusively from the writings of a dozen picked men. They form the 23rd to 25th chapters of his 2nd *Distinctio* (I, 92 ff.).

The first is a vulgar tale of the seduction of a Jewess by a bishop's nephew; the youth, finding himself on the point of disgrace and punishment, prayed to God for help, and promised amendment. "The most merciful Creator, who hateth guilt and loveth nature<sup>1</sup>, seeing this man's contrition, turned upon the head of those unbelievers the confusion which the youth feared." The Jewish accusers were smitten with dumbness; the youth took the habit in a Cistercian monastery, and the girl became a nun. The novice-master adds: "Wilt thou hear another story, partly like unto this, to the honour of our faith and of Christian folk, and to the confusion of the Jews?" The novice replies, "My soul is athirst to hear it."

(Chap. 24.) *Master*. "It was, I think, in the city of Worms that a Jew dwelt who had a fair daughter. A young clerk who lived hard by fell in love with this girl, seduced her, and rendered her pregnant; for they dwelt side by side, so that he could slip in unnoticed and speak with her at his will. She said to him: 'I have conceived; what can I do? If my father learn the truth, he will slay me.' The cleric made answer, 'Fear not; I will surely make thee free. If thy father or mother take notice of thy state, thou shalt say, "I know not whether I have conceived; this I know, that I am a virgin and have known no man"; and I will surely deal with them so that they believe thy tale.' So, considering diligently how he should save the girl, he found this device. He took a reed, and went in the silence of night to the window of their bedchamber, and whispered through this his pipe, which he had slipped through the window: 'O just folk, and welbeloved of God! (naming them by name) rejoice now, for lo! your daughter hath conceived a son, who shall be the liberator of your people Israel!' After which he withdrew the reed for a little. The Jew, awakened by these words, aroused his wife and said, 'Hast thou not heard this voice from heaven speaking unto us?' 'Nay,' said she. 'Yea,' said he, 'but let us pray that thou also mayest merit to hear it.' Then, as they prayed, this clerk stood by the window, and, hearkening diligently to their words, repeated after a brief pause those same words aforesaid, adding: 'Ye should show great honour unto your daughter, and take great care for

<sup>1</sup> *Sic*: but perhaps we should read *creaturam*.

her, and keep most diligently that son who shall be born of her virgin body; for he is the Messiah whom ye expect.' They, then, exulting, and believing the more certainly after this second revelation, could scarce await the daybreak. Then, noting how big their daughter had grown, they said, 'Daughter, tell us by whom thou hast conceived.' She made answer according as she had been taught; and they, beside themselves with joy, could not refrain from telling their familiar friends what they had heard from the angel. These told it unto others; until it was noised abroad through the cities and towns that this virgin should give birth to the Messiah. When her time was come, many Jews were gathered together in her house, to rejoice in the birth of this long-desired child. But the Just God turned the vain hopes of the wicked to scorn, their joy to sadness and their hope to confusion; and this was their desert; for it was right that, in these days, so vain a fancy as this should delude those whose fathers had, of old, shared with Herod in his trouble at the saving birth of the Son of God. In brief, the hour of this wretched girl's childbirth came, and lo! the accustomed pains and groans and cries of a woman in travail! At last the babe was born; yet no Messiah, but a girl. Whereat the Jews were grievously troubled and confused; and one of them, in the heat of his indignation, seized the child by her feet and dashed her against the wall.

*Novice.* What became of the Jewess?

*Master.* Her father, in his grievous confusion, afflicted her, and obtained by torture the confession of the whole deceit.

*Novice.* It was lamentable that this unbelieving maiden, seduced and corrupted by a believing man, was not brought unto the grace of baptism, as that girl in the first story.

*Master.* It may be that the clerk could not obtain this, or rather cared not, rejoicing more in the confusion of the Jews than in the girl's enlightenment. If, as thou sayest, it is lamentable that an unbaptized girl should not be illuminated by baptism, it is far more lamentable that, in our days, a baptized girl should be compelled by a Bishop to return to her Judaism.

*Novice.* I would fain hear this case.

(Chap. 25.) *Master.* The daughter of a certain Jew of Louvain was lately converted to our faith. A certain clerk called Renier, chaplain to the Duke at Louvain, was wont to enter into the house of a Jew of that same city, and to dispute with him of the Christian faith. Now the Jew had a little daughter who listened most diligently to these disputations, weighing according to the capacity of her understanding the words both of the clerk in his attacks and of the Jew in his answers; and thus, little by little, the disposition of God brought her to the Catholic faith. Moreover, by the clerk's secret persuasion she became so contrite that she wished for baptism. A woman was brought in to lead her forth, without suspicion, from her father's house; then the clerk aforesaid caused her to be baptized and placed her in the Cis-tercian nunnery of Parc-aux-Dames. The unbelieving father, hearing of her conversion, was much grieved, and offered much money unto

the Duke for the restoration of his daughter, who, as he complained, had been stolen from him. But when the Duke would have restored this daughter to her father, this Christian to that Jew, then the clerk Walter withstood him to his face, saying: 'My lord, if you commit this crime against God and His spouse<sup>1</sup>, your soul will never be saved.' The lord Walter, abbot of Villers, withstood him likewise. The Jew, seeing his hopes in the Duke frustrated, is said to have bribed the lord Hugh, Bishop of Liège, who so far favoured him as to write to the nuns of Parc for the restoration of the girl. But when this Jew, with his friends and his kinsfolk, came unto that nunnery, then that maiden who was there within, knowing nothing of his coming, began to smell a grievous stench, and cried aloud, 'I know not how, but a stink as of Jews grieveth me.' Meanwhile the Jews knocked at the window, and the Abbess said, 'Daughter Katharine' (for thus, methinks, she had been baptized), 'thy parents would fain see thee'; whereunto she made answer: 'Lo! that was the stench whereof I was aware! I will not see them'; and she would not go forth.

Last year that same Bishop of Liège was accused of this matter before the lord Engelbert Archbishop of Cologne sitting in synod; and he was bidden to cease from vexing that nunnery on account of the maiden baptized. In the synod he held his peace; but he obeyed not; for he cited the girl by letter to appear at Liège, under pain of excommunication, and to answer her father concerning the things objected to her. Katharine came, but under good custody. It was alleged on the Jew's behalf that she had been taken away while yet under age, and baptized by force: and some said to this Katharine: 'We have heard that thou wouldst gladly return unto thy father if thou wert permitted.' She answered, 'Who saith thus?' 'Thy father,' said they. Then in a clear voice she uttered these words: 'My father hath flatly lied in his beard.' When therefore the Jew's advocate yet insisted, the lord Abbot of Villers was moved to wrath, and said unto him: 'Master, you are speaking against God and your own honour. Know for certain that, if you speak one word more against this girl, I will labour with the lord Pope that he may reduce you to perpetual silence in all causes whatsoever.' Then was he afraid, and said secretly unto the Abbot: 'My lord Abbot, what harm is it to you if I am able to extort money from this Jew? I will say nothing which could harm the girl.' Wherefore, so soon as he had received his fee from the Jew, he said unto him: 'I dare speak no longer in this cause.'

Last year, when the lord Guido, Abbot of Clairvaux, was visitor in the bishopric of Liège, he summoned that same Bishop and warned him and asked him that, for God's sake and his own honour, he would cease from vexing this Christian girl. The Bishop answered, 'Good my lord Abbot, what hath this cause to do with you?' The Abbot replied, 'It touches me very nearly; first, because I am a Christian man, and

<sup>1</sup> The nun, in Canon Law, was the Spouse of Christ: this dates from at least as early as St Jerome.

secondly, because this nunnery where she dwelleth is dependent upon Clairvaux.' And he added: 'I place this girl and her cause under the protection of the lord Pope, and I appeal against the letters that you have published against her.' At the time of the General Chapter, he sent through our Abbot [of Heisterbach] to the Prior of le Parc certain letters which he obtained against the Bishop, wherewith he might defend himself if perchance the Bishop should again seek to vex the convent for that girl's sake.

*Novice.* Even as I was edified, a little while ago, by [your tale of] the mercy of that English Bishop, so am I scandalized at the avarice of this prelate.

*Master.* His defenders plead that his pertinacity in this matter is not from love of money, but from zeal of justice. But we cannot believe them; for, if he were impelled by justice, he would certainly not compel a girl who has been baptized, dedicated as a virgin to Christ and in a Christian Religious Order—a girl who is of age and who is fervent in religion—to return to her Jewish unbelief.

*Novice.* So it seems to me also."

(b) *Fabliau du Vilain qui conquist Paradis par plait* (Montaiglon, *Recueil Général*, tom. III, 1878, p. 209): I summarize here.

The bondman died on a Friday morning; neither angel nor devil came to dispute over his body, much to the poor fellow's relief. But he saw St Michael taking a soul to heaven; so he followed at his heels, and was in Paradise before St Peter was aware. The saint, after welcoming the officially-conducted newcomer, turned round to find this intruder inside the gate, and warned him roughly off: "We have no care for villeins, for villeins come not in this mansion." "More villein than you cannot be here, fair St Peter," for it was you who thrice denied the Lord. St Peter turns away in shame, and meets St Thomas who undertook to get rid of the boor; the villein reminds Thomas of his incredulity. Paul comes to the rescue, but is reminded of the stoning of Stephen; the three had no recourse but to take the matter up to Christ. "St Peter told Him outright how this villein had put him to shame: 'He hath confuted us all three; for myself, I am so confused that I shall never speak of this matter again.' Then said our Lord: 'I will go myself; for I would fain hear of this new matter.'" The villein, first comparing his own regular life with the spotted past of the three apostles, reminds Christ of His own promise to cast none out; an allusion, doubtless, to John vi, 37. "Moreover, I truly confessed my sins [on my deathbed] and took Thy Body worthily; and men tell us in their sermons that, if a man die thus, God doth forgive his sins." The villein has gained his case by fair and conclusive pleas, and God grants him to remain where he is.

(c) *Kynd Kittok* (Dunbar's *Poems*, ed. Baidon, 1907, p. 23).

Kind Kittok was "a gay wife," who "died of thirst, and made a good end." She made her way heavenward, but not in indecent haste; she rode upon a snail. An alehouse at heaven-gate tempted her to linger

yet more; she slept till the morrow at noon, and then stole privily past St Peter:

God lookēd and saw her letten in, and laughed his heart sore!  
 And there, yearēs seven,  
 She livēd a good life,  
 And was our Lady's henwife,  
 And held St Peter in strife  
 Aye while she was in heaven.

She lookēd out on a day, and thought very lang  
 To see the alehouse beside, in an evil hour;  
 And out of heaven the high gate did the wife gang  
 For to get a fresh drink; the ale of heaven was sour.  
 She came again to heaven's gate, when that the bell rang,  
 St Peter hit her with a club, that a great clour<sup>1</sup>  
 Rose on her head behind, because the wife went wrang;  
 And then to the alehouse she ran, the pitchers to pour,  
 There to brew and to bake:  
 Frenēdēs, I pray you heartfully  
 If ye be thirsty or dry,  
 Drink with my good dame, when ye gang by,  
 Once for my sake.

## 23

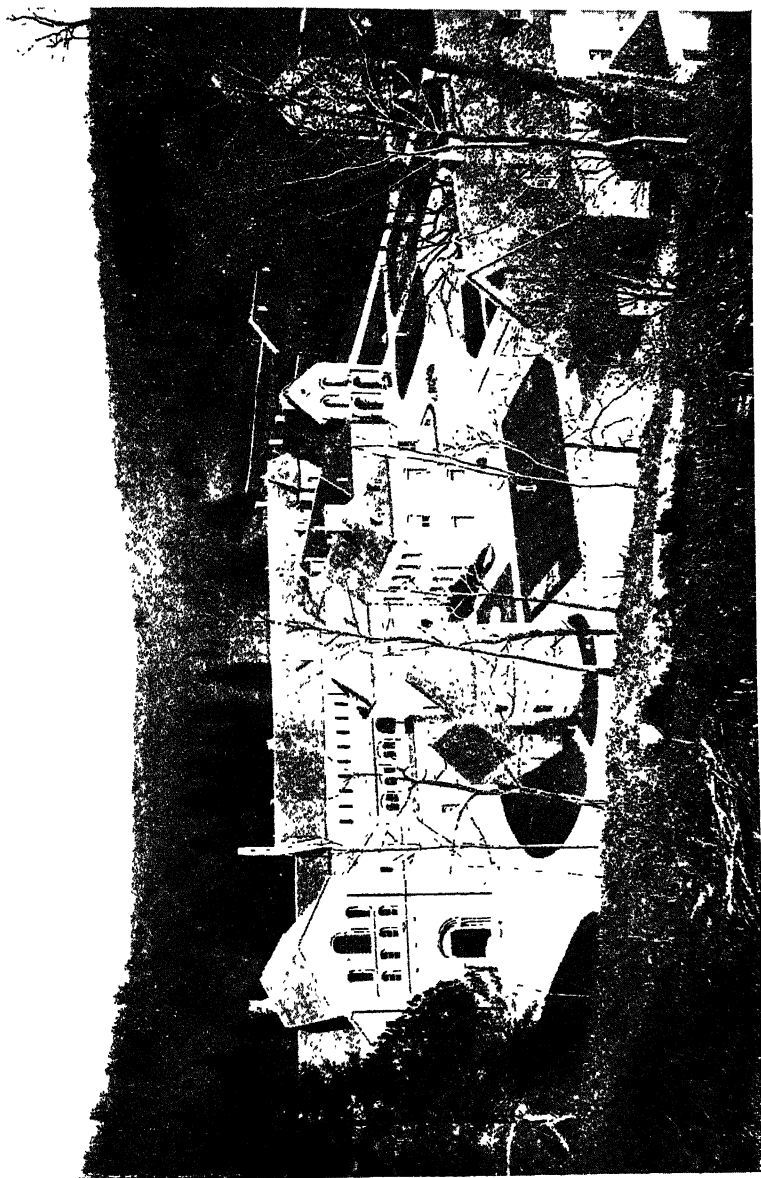
## MEDIEVAL PURITANISM

The phrase *Merrie England* is now used as a party-cry. A whole school of writers start from the assumption that the Reformation destroyed rural and artistic Arcadia; in proportion to their dislike of modern society, and their ignorance of the past, they preach a return to that unspoiled beauty and joyous simplicity which they imagine in the Middle Ages. Or rather, there are two schools which start from this assumption. The ascetic and mystic soul sees that age as a golden sunrise over the Delectable Mountains; on the other hand, the full-blooded romanticist visualizes it as a distant land where human nature had freer play than in modern civilization; consciously or unconsciously, he thinks with Rudyard Kipling in *Mandalay*:

Ship me somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,  
 Where there aren't no Ten Commandments, an' a man can raise a thirst;  
 For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's there that I would be—  
 By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy at the sea.

We may take three recent utterances as representative of these facile delusions. The first is specially typical of the process of arguing back from our modern repulsions to an imaginary past whose very vagueness enlists our sympathies, because we are able to shape it as the exact opposite of all that we dislike among the men and women around us.

<sup>1</sup> Bump, bruise.



THE ABBEY OF FONTENAY



THE DOVECOTE AT FONTENAY

(1) R. Adams Cram, *The Gothic Quest*, p. 293. "The real reason [why men do not recognize Mass as the perfection of art] is the inherited hatred of beauty as a minister of God; the persistent fury of the Puritan forest-fighter, recrudescence in the shame-faced but helpless heir of animosities in which he had no part. 'The fathers ate sour fruit, and the children's teeth are set on edge'; therefore they gnash them at poor pathetic Beauty when she comes to do God service, even as they gnashed them once at her ministrations in secular things."

(2) H. Belloc, *Europe and the Faith*, p. 259. "Two notes mark the time [thirteenth century] for anyone who is acquainted with its building, its letters, and its wars; a note of youth, and a note of content." And again on p. 320, speaking of the effects of the 300 years following the Reformation: "With all these, of course, we have had a universal mark—the progressive extension of despair."

(3) *The Church Times*, Jan. 13, 1922, *The Editor's Table*. "[Medieval] spring, summer and autumn had many delights, when the Church's holy days were holidays; when the people not only worked hard, but prayed hard and played hard."

In my second volume, I shall have to set the detailed testimony of contemporaries against this idealization of village life as such; meanwhile it is necessary to mark how deeply the orthodox creed of the Middle Ages was tinged with puritanism, and how definitely a great deal of this "playing hard" was done, if at all, in the teeth of the parson or the official moralist.

Upon the puritanical view of marriage I have already touched in appendix 2. Fr Bede Jarrett represents not the current monastic view, but the refinements of a modern Religious born and bred in modern society, when he emphasizes the positive as opposed to the negative side of the celibate ideal<sup>1</sup>. It would be possible to cite a small minority of medieval writers who bear this out to some extent; but these are far from representing the mass. St Jerome is not only one of the greatest, but also one of the most truly representative exponents of the monastic ideal; all through the Middle Ages he is quoted as a decisive authority; and his view is predominantly negative. It was his writings, and those of other monastic moralists, which supplied the medieval misogynist with his most deadly weapons.

#### (a) *Natural beauty*

Though there are scattered records of the joy taken by medieval Religious in natural beauty, yet this joy is far from universal even

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Life*, pp. 62 ff. "The idea of virginity must accordingly be looked at *entirely* from the point of view of love. It has had *always* for Christian monasticism a firmly positive appeal, *not in any sense as the quenching of human nature*, but as the extreme expression of its capacity; not as the absence of love, but as its most beautiful and most passionate fulfilment." Let the words which I have here italicized be tested by the perusal of any frank document from early monasticism; e.g. from *The Paradise of the Fathers*, so easily accessible now in Mr Wallis Budge's translation, or St Jerome's letters, which are also accessible in English.



among the Franciscans, and is definitely exceptional outside that Order. Few, indeed, went quite so far as "the Carmelite mystic St John of the Cross, the friend of St Teresa, who in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* pursues the matter with scientific method and unrelenting logic through each faculty of the mind, each power of the soul, urging that for the spiritual man no joy, no pleasure, in anything, whether natural or spiritual, is admissible, there being 'nothing in which a man may rejoice except in serving God' (bk III, c. 19). Such sentences as the following abound: 'The spiritual Christian ought to suppress all joy in created things, because it is offensive in the sight of God' (*ibid.*).'" But Abbot Butler, from whom this quotation is taken, exaggerates in his attempt to clear Benedictinism from this same reproach. It might not be possible to find this thorough-going cast-iron puritanism in any Benedictine moralist; but their general tone is what, in these days, would be called definitely puritan; and some of their utterances imply almost as much as St John of the Cross explicitly proclaims. In the woods, the mountains, and the fens, what they mainly saw was the devil; and, practically, most of them saw the devil behind human beauty. Here, for instance, is the celebrated passage from Odo of Cluny (P.L. vol. 133, col. 556; Giraldus Cambrensis has paid Odo the compliment of borrowing the most grisly portions of this satire; see his *Gem. Eccl.* R.S. II, 181. The nucleus of it is in Boethius, *Consol.* III, prosa 8).

"Moreover, God hath set certain definite and natural limits to bodily beauty; but the beauty of the soul He hath created free, and hath concluded it under no necessity. For, even though God had left to our choice the power of making our own bodily comeliness, this would create a superfluous solicitude, and we should spend our whole lives in the things which profit not, thereby necessarily neglecting the adornment of our souls. For even now, when we have no real power of adding to our beauty, we are constantly thinking and doing how we may cultivate that beauty, seeking to add thereunto by coloured dyes, or by the composition of our hair, or by rolling our eyes or by varying our vesture or by divers other far-fetched means; how much better would it be, all this while, if we were intent upon the culture of our souls! For bodily beauty is but skin-deep; if men could see below the skin, as the lynxes of Boeotia are said to see into the inward parts, then the sight of a woman would be nauseous unto them. All that beauty consisteth but in phlegm and blood and humours and gall. If a man consider that which is hidden within the nose, the throat, and the belly, he will find filth everywhere; and, if we cannot bring ourselves, even with the tips of our fingers, to touch such phlegm or dung, wherefore do we desire to embrace this bag of filth itself? For God, the Author of Nature, though He have made man a creature of much dignity, yet doth He permit us to suffer much in this life for the repression of our fleshly pride. It is for that reason that a man's hair in our food or our drink is more loathsome to us [than that of another animal]; therefore also we less abhor to find upon our bodies the flea which springeth from the dusts than the louse which is begotten of our own bodily humours. But,

to see clearly that our bodily beauty, whatsoever it be, springeth not from the flesh but from the soul, let us consider what delight there is in a man's corpse—nay, rather, with what horror it striketh the beholder: for, when the soul, with all its comeliness, is gone, therewith departeth that beauty which it had lent unto the flesh. But those men or women who, in their pride, submit themselves to the Author of all Foulness, see not according to the religion of faith or according to right reason, and therefore they savour only of fleshly things, not of the Spirit of God. Before the faith of Christ shone upon the world, before men knew of another life, where we are to receive an everlasting kingdom for our good deeds or an undying hell for the evil, it was no great marvel that mortal men submitted to worldly enticements, . . . .”

More than four centuries later, the Dominican Bromyard writes: “Beauty is a perilous thing, both to its possessors and to those who gaze thereon. Let me cite the example of a certain good woman whereof Thomas Cantimpratanus saith that she was exceeding fair, and many men came together to behold her; wherefore she prayed to be made a leper, and her prayer was heard: for she knew that it is better to enter into life a hideous leper than to have Absalom's beauty and go to hell. . . O marvellous and lamentable folly of many folk! who yet desire bodily beauty and are careful to keep it, washing and bathing so often, adorning themselves and looking in their mirror and painting that which, within, is but foul and rotten and stinking, as a whited wall of mud; whereas their soul, which by nature is most clean, and which (if they would) might retain its beauty for ever—this they seldom wash with listening to sermons, and yet more rarely do they go to confession” (P. xiv, 4-7; cf. *Alphabet of Tales*, under *abscondere*).

The violence of this and other similar monastic rhetoric is a measure of its untruth to human nature. There was doubtless a real foundation of fact in that story of youthful depravity which monks themselves repeated as a terrible warning. “A young hermit, who had been nourished in the desert from his youth up, went with his abbot to the town. There he saw women dancing together, and asked earnestly of his abbot what these might be. ‘These are geese,’ answered he. When they were come back to the cloister, the boy began to weep. ‘Son,’ said his abbot, ‘what wouldest thou?’ ‘Father, I would fain eat of those geese which I saw in the city.’ Then the abbot called his brethren together, and said, ‘Consider with anxious care, my brethren, how perilous is the sight of a woman. For this innocent boy, who had been nourished in the wilderness and had never seen a woman, hath been kindled to carnal concupiscence by their mere sight, and now he is in burning flames!’” In an earlier variant, this is a prince's son to whom his father describes women as demons, but with the same result<sup>1</sup>. The medieval moralist seldom shows a frank and fearless appreciation of natural beauty; even when Gower comes to speak of it—Gower, who had lived in the world, and who was Chaucer's close friend—his praise

<sup>1</sup> Herolt, *Ex. L*, c. 23; cf. 24, and Vitry, p. 38, with Crane's notes on p. 170.

is tame and almost hesitating (*Mirour de l'Omme*, ll. 26, 632 ff.). It is seldom, again, that a monk ventures to speak of friendship so heartily as Ailred of Rievaulx does (P.L. vol. 195, col. 619).

(b) *Music*

We have seen how unsympathetic most monastic reformers were to painting, sculpture and architecture; nor were they always more sympathetic to music. Sometimes, as in St Gregory's and St Bernard's case, they did indeed encourage it in its simpler forms; St Francis, as is well known, loved the troubadours; but these cannot be taken as typical.

Ailred of Rievaulx was one of the glories of early Cistercianism; he had scant sympathy with elaboration of church music; he writes as we might have expected Richard Baxter to write *On the Vain Pleasure of the Ears* (*Spec. Charit.* lib. II, c. 23; P.L. vol. 195, col. 571). "Let us now speak of those who cloak their matter of pleasure under a mask of religion; who yoke to the use of their own vanity those things which the patriarchs healthily practised as types of things to come. Wherefore, I pray—now that types and figures have been abolished—wherefore so many organs and cymbals in the Church? Of what profit, prithee, is that terrible blast of the bellows, expressing rather the crash of thunder than the sweetness of a voice? To what purpose is that contraction and infraction of the voice, while one singeth low, another singeth aside, and a third divides and cuts the notes in the midst? The voice is now strangled, now broken, now dashed aloft, now protracted in a long-drawn note. Sometimes, I blush to say it, it is forced into a neighing as of horses; again, emasculated of all manly vigour, it is sharpened to the shrillness of a woman's voice; or, again, it is twisted and tortured into artificial circumvolutions. At one moment, the man may be seen open-mouthed, not singing but gasping as one who fights for breath; his voice is ridiculously intercepted; it threatens sudden silence; then it rattles as in death-agony, or mimics the throes of an epileptic. His whole body, meanwhile, is in histrionic agitation; his lips twist and turn, his shoulders play, his fingers bend in response to every changing note. And this ridiculous indiscipline is called by the name of religion; and, wheresoever there is most of this stir, men claim that God is most honourably served! Meanwhile the common folk stand in trembling awe, marvelling at the rush of the bellows, the clashing of cymbals, and the harmony of the pipes; yet it is not without grinning laughter that they watch the singers' wanton gesticulations, the meretricious alternations and irregularities of the voice; so that you would think they had come together not to a house of prayer but to a playhouse; not to pray, but to gape. Nor do men fear that tremendous Majesty in whose presence they are; nor do they pay reverence to that mystic shrine which is there served, where Christ is mystically wrapped in linen cloth, where His most sacred blood is delivered in the chalice, where the heavens are opened, the angels stand by, and terrestrial things are mingled with celestial, and angels join company with men. Thus,

what the holy fathers instituted to excite the weak [in faith] to love and piety, is pressed into the service of unlawful pleasure."

These bitter words are quoted again in full by the great Belgian canonist Van Espen (*Jus. Eccl. Univ.* pars iv, ii, 4, § 6; *De Horis Canonicis*; ed. Cologne, 1725, p. 216). He applies the words to his own day, and approves of certain bishops who have banished instrumental music from the choir. In § 7 he discusses whether it is permissible to have organs in churches. He notes that Aquinas seems to imply that musical instruments are not ordinarily edifying, at any rate, in Christian worship, and that Cardinal Caietan, commenting on St Thomas in the early sixteenth century, justifies their use only on the plea of the religious decay of his age, which needed a sparing use of such music to restore its flagging devotion. Bromyard, though more briefly, speaks almost as bitterly as Ailred against the debasement of church music to tickle the ears of worshippers in his own day (*Sum. Praed.* O. vii, 20). To the Strassburg preacher Peter Wiggram, nephew to the great Geiler v. Kaysersberg, music is a thing out of place in these days of sin and lamentation<sup>1</sup>.

(c) *Dance*

This is condemned with striking unanimity by medieval moralists, whether monastic or secular. It is true that a great deal of dancing went on in the medieval village, just as a good deal of drinking went on when liquor was easily obtainable; it is true also that the clergy sometimes danced and drank with their parishioners. But there is far less record of the former condescension than of the latter; and it would be quite impossible, I think, to find any religious writer who admitted the cleric's right to join in any dance whatsoever; and the dance itself is more consistently condemned, even for lay folk, than the tavern<sup>2</sup>. If we tried to get back to the Middle Ages as to a blissful time of "dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth," our first struggle would be against the Church. And the Roman Church has kept this puritan attitude still longer than Protestantism. In the most modern of its books of reference, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, the writer of the article on Dancing is evidently embarrassed by the vigour and consistency of the ecclesiastical policy of prohibition. As a matter of counsel for the present moment, he dares to say no more than that "undoubtedly old national dances in which the performers stand apart, hardly, if at all, holding the partner's hand, fall under ethical censure scarcely more than any other kind of social intercourse" (iv, 619). His medieval predecessors seldom ventured even so far as this. When

<sup>1</sup> Geiler, *Sermones et Varii Tractatus*, 1518, fol. 144 a.

<sup>2</sup> The tavern, medieval preachers tell us, is the devil's Church. Bromyard may be quoted as characteristic (*Sum. Praed.* E. i, 3): "For, even as the fowler striveth to bring the birds together in one place, where they may be caught and snared, so doth the devil bring many together in the tavern; and here, out of a score, scarce one or two can say [with the Psalmist], 'The snare is broken, and we are escaped.'" So Meffret: "taverns, which are the devil's church, and wherein [drinkers] serve him by day and night" (*Temp.* p. 258).

the moralist has anything to say in favour of games of any sort, it is nearly always that he is quoting from Aristotle's *Ethics*, in words of somewhat lukewarm approval which could not be altogether ignored from the pen of "The Master of All that know"<sup>1</sup>. There is, again, the story of St John the Evangelist playing with a pheasant or partridge, and reminding his critic that a bow cannot always be full-strung (*Golden Legend*, II, 172). This is alluded to by Salimbene and fairly often quoted in full; cf. Fordun, *Scotichronicon*, lib. ix, c. xiv, with corroboration from Cicero, *De Officiis*, lib. i. But this, like Aristotle's, was a pre-Christian moral often neglected, if not repudiated, by zealous medieval moralists. St Bernard writes: "Always in a robust and active body the mind lies more soft and more lukewarm; and, on the other hand, the spirit flourishes more strongly and more actively in an infirm and weakly body" (Ep. 254, § 6). Even his adversary, Abailard, was of the same mind: "Plato himself, though a rich man... in order that he might devote himself to philosophy, chose that estate called *Academe*, far from Athens, not only desolate but even pestilent, in order that, by the care and frequency of their sicknesses, the attacks of lust should be broken and his disciples should feel no pleasure but in the things which they were learning" (*Hist. Calam.*, in *Epistolae*, ed. Rawlinson, 1718, p. 30). It needed Grosseteste's robust sense to recognize, at least by implication, the principle of *mens sana in corpore sano* (*Mon. Franc.* R.S. I, 66).

The nearest approach to explicit approval of dancing, perhaps, is in the *Summa Angelica*, s.v. *Corea*. Is it lawful at all? asks the good friar, and replies, *Yes*, under certain definite conditions. (1) At proper times, not at times of prayer or penitence, "wherefore masters hold that it is a mortal sin to dance on Sundays... which, I think, holds good when it takes folk away from Mass or Sermon or Vespers, or when they dance for a considerable time, say, *e.g.* for the greater part of the day; otherwise not." (2) By proper persons; for the clergy, dance is a mortal sin, "unless perchance the slightness and the quality of the dance excuse them; as, for instance, if they dance in secret." (3) The dance must be of an honest kind. (4) The dancer's intention must be good. (5) The place must be suitable; not in the church or the graveyard. (6) The dance must be infrequent; "for Rodulfus saith that he who habitually joineth in dances—*coreas ducens ex consuetudine*—sinneth mortally." (7) The dancer must be steadfast; he may begin with no

<sup>1</sup> *E.g.* Meffret, *Temp.* pp. 33-4 and 323-4, summarized from the *Ethics*, bk iv, c. 16. Yet on p. 324 Meffret quotes from Chrysostom also: "Where dancing is, there is the devil. God gave us our feet, not that we should thus skip like camels but that we should make choirs with the angels; in dances men exult, and the ministers of demons rejoice." And in the other volume (*Fest.* p. 70) he pours the same righteous scorn as his fellow-moralists on all who disfigure with masks the faces which God has given them—what sort of figure will such mummers cut at the Day of Judgement? God will ask, "Whose is this image?" and "if thou art voiceless, the angels will say, 'This man beareth Caesar's image, that is, the devil's'... then will the Judge give sentence, saying, 'Render unto Caesar those things which are Caesar's; that is, give this man into the devil's power.'"

evil intention, but his mind may be melted to lust, as David's was melted at the sight of Bathsheba. "And, seeing that the aforesaid [seven] conditions [of safety] are not to be found in the dances of our days, therefore I see not how, without mortal sin, any man may join in them habitually, as they are commonly conducted. Yet Alexander saith (II, 2, tit. *de ludo*) that play or dancing sometimes springeth from spiritual merriment, and then it is meritorious, even as David played and danced before the Ark of the Lord. At other times it cometh from recreation or exercise, and thus it may be without sin. Sometimes, again, from the indiscipline of a wanton mind; and then it is a sin, either mortal or venial, as hath been said already." He goes on similarly with the case of those who only look on at dances; it may be a mortal sin, or venial, or even meritorious, according as we have distinguished already between dances themselves.

Exceptionally liberal, again, is that younger contemporary of Chaucer, probably a friar also, who wrote the book called *Dives and Pauper* for the religious education of his age. The book is in form of a dialogue; Dives is the man in the street; Pauper is his spiritual adviser; this subject of dance is discussed in Com. III, cap. 17, col. 3. "*Dives*. Contra, St Austin saith that it were less wicked to go at the plough and at the cart and card and spin in the Sunday than to lead dances. *Pauper*. St Austin speaketh of such dances and plays as was used in his time, when Xtian people was much medled with heathen people, and by old custom and example of heathen people used unhonest dances and plays that by old time were ordained to stir folk to lechery and to other sins. And so, if dancing and playing now on the holidays stir men and women to pride, to lechery, gluttony and sloth, to overlong waking on nights, and to idleship on the workdays, and other sins, as it is right likely that they do in our days, then be they unlawful both on the holy day and on the workday. And against all such spake St Austin. But against honest dances, and plays done in due time and in good manner in the holy day, spake not St Austin"<sup>1</sup>.

This, after all, takes us no farther than Thomas à Kempis's *angelica hilaritas*; it is the sort of sober joy in religion that Baxter might have praised. St Antonino of Florence is distinctly less liberal; with all his qualifications, he contemplates no case where dance is entirely free from sin (*Summa*, pars II, int. sev. ii, c. 3, p. 253), "Dances which are done with inordinate merriment are mortal sins in five ways. First, when they are done from lust. Secondly, when they are done in churches; for this is sacrilege. Thirdly, when they are done by clerics and Religious with women, by reason of the scandal. Fourthly, when they are done from vain glory or vain merriment so intemperate that they are made an end in themselves. Fifthly, when such dancers heed not the scandal [they give] to their neighbour, then it is a mortal sin. But in other cases dance is commonly a venial sin. Yet it might sometimes be a mortal sin; nor is it easy to judge exactly in such cases."

<sup>1</sup> Cf. chap. xviii, where the author claims scriptural warrant for *serious* joy; Pauper's motto is *alway sad, alway glad*.

While the most sympathetic wrote thus—for St Antonino was a man of very real human sympathies and had great knowledge of the world—the majority of mediæval ecclesiastics took a far less friendly ground, and practically condemned the dance altogether. Jacques de Vitry tells us (p. 115) how “A certain maiden saw [in a vision] the Blessed Virgin with a multitude of virgins, and desired vehemently to be with them. To whom the Blessed Virgin said, ‘Laugh not for thirty days, and thou shalt be with us.’ For thirty days the maiden abstained from laughter, and died, and entered into the promised glory; we cannot doubt that, unless she had abstained from laughter and song and dance, she would never have been received by the Blessed Virgin among that virgin crew.” Herolt, a man still more representative of the average teacher of his day, is, if possible, still more severe (*Ex. E. VII*; cf. *VIII* to *XIII*, which are all in the same tone). “A certain noble dedicated his beloved son to God in Religion; wherein the youth profited greatly. One day, as he prayed before the cross according to his wont, he bethought him to beseech that he might know what did most for the provoking of God’s wrath, and the multiplication of sins. And lo! as he prayed and wept, a radiant youth appeared unto him, saying that it is the dancers who most revile and dishonour Christ. For their outstretched arms, and their interweaving of arms and fingers, doth derisively represent Christ’s arms stretched for us upon the cross. Again, all dancers are wont to wear garlands and coronets of flowers, whereby they mock their Master’s crown of thorns. Moreover, they are gaily clad, in derision of the humble Jesus hanging naked on the cross. They sing in merriment, they laugh and grin, thus mocking the tears and cries of their crucified Lord. They kiss each other, in mockery of the kiss of Judas. They paint their faces, in derision of Christ’s face that was spat upon and veiled. Almost all the mortal sins are committed in the dance.” Another young monk, in St Patrick’s Purgatory, “saw there an iron circle, thick set with the sharpest nails that might be, whereon multitudes danced under a rain of unremitting flame and sulphur, while dragons gnawed at their bowels. . . . When he came back, if he saw folk dance, he was wont to cry: ‘Flee, dear brethren, for dancers are doomed to fearful tortures’” (*ibid.* ix). And, like the author of the *Summa Angelica*, Herolt reminds us that onlookers may suffer with the dancers themselves (*Serm.* xxxvi, v).

“The sister of St Damian appeared to him after her death, and said that she was in the greatest torture; and when the saint enquired what might be the cause of so great pains, after her so holy life, then she made answer: ‘Because once, standing in mine own chamber, I listened with a certain sweetness to the songs of them that danced in the streets, for which I did no penance during my earthly life; wherefore I must now be punished for fifteen days in purgatory’<sup>1</sup>. Now, some men seek

<sup>1</sup> What these fifteen days meant, we may infer from another story in the same book (*Exempla*, P. Lxxxvi): “Albert, the Great Doctor of Theology, chose for himself ten days of purgatory; and afterwards he appeared to a certain devout woman and said, ‘I did foolishly in that I chose those ten days;

to excuse themselves for their sins, saying that folk have danced for a hundred years, and therefore they may dance even nowadays. Whereunto I answer that, a hundred years ago, men went to hell no less surely for their misdeeds than nowadays; and that an evil custom is no excuse for sin; nay, the longer the custom the greater the peril, as is written in Canon Law" (Decret. xxiii, q. 1). Bromyard, who stands with Herolt in the front rank of popularity among religious educators of the later Middle Ages, is of the same mind also (*Sum. Praed.* C. xv, 1 ff.; I have abbreviated slightly here). "The dancers' offices in the devil's court can be distinguished and comprehended and shown forth by a certain similitude to the courts of God and of other lords. For, like the Church of God, this Church of Malignants, this congregation of the devil's parishioners, instead of the clerk who rings his bell to call the people together, hath a piper playing before the infernal altar of the devil; whereof the altar-stone is a body and head curiously adorned. For, even as the sacristan, on great festivals when more folk will come together, doth the more adorn his altars, in the thought that more folk will see them that day, so also doth Pokerellus, that sacristan of hell, towards those dancing women, saying: 'To-day is a great festival; many folk will see thee; adorn thyself, therefore, that thou mayest be thought fair, and that the onlookers may rejoice in thy beauty.' The priest's part is taken by him who beginneth the song<sup>1</sup>; the clerk's part, by those who take it up and sing on; that of the parishioners, by those who stand or sit by, gazing and listening longer, and with greater pleasure, than they did at Mass or sermon before their dinner. Again, such folk are like brute beasts; for, even as horses and other beasts, when they are set for sale, are decked out and marked with a sign on their head, so do these beasts of the devil bear garlands on their heads, that they may be better and sooner bought. Again, they play the part of spectres<sup>2</sup>; for two sorts of men wear masks, *viz.* players and robbers. For those who play in those plays which are called *miracles* in the vulgar tongue use masks, under which the players are disguised; so also the demons (whose game it is to destroy souls and to deceive them by sin) use in that play masks—that is, curious disguise of adornment—and dancers, whose feet are swift to seek evil. Moreover, robbers use masks for a disguise; so also do these devils, these soul-thieves. Again, dancers

for I am in the most grievous pains. . . I say unto you, it is more grievous to be in purgatory for the twinkling of an eye, than to bear all the agony of St Lawrence on his gridiron." And again (*Serm.* cxxviii, m: "The fire of purgatory is, in heat, the same as the fire of hell; it differeth only in its transitory and temporal nature. . . and earthly fire is to purgatory-fire as a mere painted show is to the true." Again, purgatory is "as if all the mountains and all the wood and all that can be seen in this world were burning together." Saints Cosmas and Damian, brothers, were among the earliest of Christian martyrs, and are commemorated in the Mass.

<sup>1</sup> The medieval dance was nearly always combined with song: there was generally a recognized leader, who sometimes had a bell also.

<sup>2</sup> There is here an untranslatable play upon words; *larva* means both *ghost* and *mask*.



are like that dancing daughter of Herodias, through whom John Baptist lost his head; so, through dancers, do many lose their souls. So saith Scripture (Ecclus. ix, 4), 'Use not much the company of her that is a dancer, and hearken not to her, lest thou perish by the force of her charms.' And he saith well, *hearken not, lest thou perish*; for this is the devil's intention, that the hearers should perish together with the dancers."

The devil provokes most dancing about Eastertide and Pentecost, that folk may lose all the merits they have gained through the Church's fasts. "The devil is like a swineherd who, when he wishes to gather his swine together, maketh one of them to squeal; so doth the devil make one girl strike up the song which he himself hath made; for, even as the Holy Ghost dictated Holy Scripture and canticles in God's praise, so doth the devil dictate ballads treating of love-follies and lechery and uncleanness." These dancers are worse than the Jews, who would not crucify Christ on a feast day, "whereas these do more gladly and more commonly offend Him, and cause His crucifixion, on holy-days than at other times." Church processions are made to appease wars, tempests and plagues; these devilish processions must, on the contrary, attract corresponding misfortunes upon society. Yet folk care more for them than for the Church services; you may go into a town and find men "in the greatest indiscipline, busied with dances and other games." Moreover, they are ferocious when interfered with: *cet animal est très méchant; quand on l'attaque, il se défend*. "Men are more fervent for such buffoons and corrupters of morals than for the preaching of God's word, as was made plain in Italy. For there, a certain Godfearing man, as men say, was hindered in his preaching by the timbrel and the dance; wherefore, in a gust of the Spirit, he ran forward and brake the timbrel with his knife. And the village-folk, seeing this, rose in defence of this devil-worshipper, and ill-treated the worshipper of God, even with grievous stripes." But "against all these evils, remedies may be found. One is the remedy of fear and reason; to wit, that we should reflect that this place wherein we are set is a valley of tears and not of dancing, of wretchedness and not of song... wherein men have more occasion to weep than to sing. Another remedy is that of rigour and forcible constraint. For we must remember that some dancers are under authority; to wit, of their parents or masters, by whom they ought to be constrained and held back, as by removal of all occasion, or by deprival of their finery, as we singe the cat's skin lest she should go caterwauling abroad; or, again, by efficacious castigation, lest ruin should come upon themselves afterwards, as it came upon Eli who chastised not his sons effectively. But all are under the power of their spiritual fathers, who may withhold them from such dances, even as the king's ministers might restrain their subjects from conspiring against the king. For those who deck out their sons or daughters or fellows or subordinates, and send them to dance, are as who should cut, or suffer others to cut, straw for the better burning of God's temple." Compare also B. II, 10. Several of the keenest touches of satire in

this long tirade of Bromyard are taken from the earlier moralists Jacques de Vitry and Etienne de Bourbon. Another distinguished and influential Dominican, Nider, who died in 1438, is perhaps still more condemnatory; a brief extract may suffice from the long indictment in his *Preceptorium* (Prec. vi, cap. iii b). "Dancing should be dissuaded in the third place, because the devil hath there very many weapons for the slaying of souls; for woman (as St Jerome saith) is as a sword of fire...and a woman drest out in trinkery is a diabolic net, wherein the devil taketh an infinite multitude of souls to perdition." The still later Dominican, Guillaume Pepin, puts dances in the most unsavoury collocation; there are three things which honest folk avoid—prostibula, choreas, tabernas (*Serm. Quadrages. sup. Epistolas*, Dom. 11<sup>a</sup> Quad. (Paris, 1517, f. 28 a). For similar utterances from other teachers of great authority, see Humbert de Romans, p. 563 g and Gerson, I, 196 f. Dancing was not infrequently forbidden by church synods; e.g. Wilkins, II, 31. Berthold of Regensburg, a friar who might have known St Francis himself, and one of the most human of all the great mission-preachers of the Middle Ages, is consistent in his disapprobation; (*Predigten*, I, 176, 224, 268, 446, 561; II, 253, 269). One specimen may suffice (I, 268): "Thou shalt not dance on the Day of Rest, nor play nor dice, for want of something to do." Here a protest comes from the congregation: "How, brother Berthold, thou wouldest set us a very narrow way! Shall we then have no occupation, nor go anywhere, nor do other things [after church], neither dance nor play? lo! how then shall we do to pass the day?" "In church service" (answers Berthold) "and in good works and almsgiving and earning of indulgences"; and he clinches these moral precepts with that quotation from Augustine which was incorporated in Canon Law: "It is better even to do field work on the holy-day than to dance." "Except" (adds Berthold by way of qualification), "except at bridals; there, folk may dance without mortal sin. On the other hand, thou mayest so dance as to commit mortal sin. He who goeth to field work, and he who danceth, alike sin mortally; but the field work is some use, and dancing profiteth no man." The peasants, of course, continued to protest or to disobey openly; their perverse determination to enjoy themselves on Sundays and holidays troubled good friars in the fifteenth century as it had troubled these good Franciscans in the thirteenth. St Antonino of Florence, in his *Summa Confessionalis*, deals with the sins most common to each state of life separately. When he comes to the chapter of Husbandmen and Countryfolk, one of the questions which he bids the priest put to his penitents runs thus: "Hast thou spent time upon games, dances, and other vanities?"—*si vacavit ludis, choreis, et aliis vanitatibus* (pars III, int. sev. ii, c. 9, p. 315). Moreover (to anticipate a subject which I treat more fully in my second volume,) church practice does not seem to have been much more liberal here than church theory, even in Germany, which has been celebrated as the special home of the dance. In the six volumes of manorial laws collected by Jakob Grimm,

under the name of *Weisthümer*, by far the largest number of allusions to dance or play are unfavourable or absolutely prohibitory: the "play," however, was evidently in most cases gambling. With regard to dance, the only really favourable notices are quite late; the earliest, and by far the best, dates from 1561, when the young folk are allowed, after the hay-harvest, to dance round a haycock and take it as their perquisite (II, 412); this is at Gillenfeld, subject to the canons of Koblenz. In the fifteenth century, on four St-Gall manors the bailiff had a right to forbid all dancing (V, 137, 154). In the villages subject to the great abbey of St Peter in the Black Forest, "the parson has the right of forbidding dancing; and, when he chooses to prohibit all dance, then every dancer pays a fine of 3 shillings, be it man or woman" (I, 353).

It will be noted that song has already been implicitly disapproved, if not actually condemned, side by side with dance. Gerson may again be quoted in this connexion (IV, 340, *Serm. Dom. iv Adventus*): "The mouth asketh whether songs are lawful? Reason distinguisheth between song and song; whether they are honest and right in time and place, or foul and lecherous, false or heretical, or at the wrong time or place, as in churches, or harmful to others. The three last are sinful and must be prohibited. Note that the voice of a woman is like unto that Siren whom Ulysses passed by, stopping up his ears." He goes on to speak of the author of the *Roman de la Rose* as expiating his poem in hell, and adds: "Here it might be asked whether pipers—*fistulatores*—are in a state of grace. I hold that they are, if they exercise their art with humility." His contemporary Herolt is even less encouraging: a certain devout widow was privileged to look in upon the tortures of hell, and saw a soul which had been too musical on earth. "Demons stood by him, blowing through trumpets into his ears so that flames of fire gushed out from his ears and eyes and nostrils and at every pore; and they said unto him, 'Take this for those vain chants and songs to which thou hast listened!'" (*Ex. P. LXI*). Peter Wicram held that priests committed mortal sin when they joined in with the lower clergy at the Feast of Fools (Geiler, *Sermones, etc.*, 1518, fol. 144 a).

#### (d) *Dress and Trifling*

St Antonino's instructions to Religious confessors are interesting (*Summ. Confess.* pars III, inst. sev. ii, cap. 13; *De Religiosis*, section *de exercitio*, p. 343). He writes: "[Ask the penitent] if he<sup>1</sup> hath given way to idleness, which is the cesspool of all evils, and to what extent. If he wasteth his time in doing worthless things. If he doth the occupations of worldly folk, such as making purses, embroidered garments, brocades<sup>2</sup> or linen network, and things of that sort, or too precious confections or other matters of gluttony; for that is a great sin and

<sup>1</sup> Or *she*; the confessor is being instructed in his duty to Religious of both sexes, and the enquiries as to needlework would definitely point to nuns, even if we had not so many other instances of this prohibition against the making of purses, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Recamations*; see Ducange s.v. *Rechamator*.

abuse, and an occasion of many evils; on which account it must be forbidden. This evil also is found in the nuns of our day—in *monialibus modernis*.

"Again, concerning conversation with others; if he hath been too light of conversation or hath led others into levity or laughter by his words or gestures or jests—*solacii*, which though they may sometimes be done without sin for recreation's sake, or to arouse oneself or others from *accedia*, yet such things are rarely fitting for Religious. If he hath ever laughed or jested in a way befitting buffoons<sup>1</sup> or play-actors rather than Religious... If he readeth curious and useless things, whereby he is withdrawn from more necessary matters; or if he readeth pagan teachers or poetic fictions and books of that sort; for that is the sin of curiosity."

And the confessor, in thus standing between the Christian soul and ordinary earthly enjoyments, is cruel only to be kind; for ordinary earthly joys lead only too easily down the broad path to hell. And in hell is a bath of fire hotter than any imagination can depict; and a bed of fire deeper than the height from earth to heaven. "This bath and this bed of hell should be in the mind of all such as bathe themselves twice or thrice a week in carnal delight, and who sleep and turn from side to side, long after dawn, in featherbeds and soft quilts" (Herolt, *Serm.* ci, n). Again, "the fifth pain of hell is the horrid sight of the devils; for, even as God and the Saints will be seen with great delight, even so in hell is there a Vision so horrible of devils and damned that, even if there were no other torment, this alone would suffice them... Let those consider this who in this life turn their face upon the vanities of the world, gazing upon dances and upon women in their finery, wherein they grievously offend against God (Matt. v)... The sixth pain is chains and darkness. Those in especial are there, bound hand and foot, who here in this world sinned against God by unlawful touch or walking, as in embracing, kissing, touching others or themselves unlawfully, or dancing and leaping and walking proudly with their feet... [The damned] remember their good things now past, and this shall be for an increase of their pain and misery, as saith Boethius in his *Consolation of Philosophy*: 'It is the saddest sort of misfortune to remember that we have been happy'... St Anselm saith that, even though all men that ever were born, from Adam to the present day, were now on earth, and if all these were excellent preachers, and all preached concerning even the least of the pains of hell, yet all together could not reveal unto us that least of torments" (*ibid.* cxxv, r). The milliner has been a cause of ruin to souls innumerable: "the devil doth especially provoke women to adorn themselves more than men; for they are more efficacious to ensnare souls" (*Sum. Angel.* s.v. *Ornatus*). But on this point the flood of pulpit-eloquence is overwhelming; it would take volumes to reproduce the tirades of preachers against female dress. A few of the most piquant may be found in the second of my *Medieval Studies*; others may be sought in Bromyard, L. VII, 5, 10, 13, 15, 18; P. II, 42.

Nor did the Reformation effect anything like the cleavage here which

<sup>1</sup> The Roman edition of about 1480 has here not *mimis* but *simis*, apes.

men often imagine. Earnest men on both sides remained in fairly close agreement; it is well known how a curé of Fénelon's diocese boasted of having at last succeeded in suppressing the dance in his parish, and how the good Archbishop replied, "Monsieur le curé, let us not dance ourselves, but let us permit it to these poor folk. Why should we prevent them from forgetting their wretchedness for once in a way?"<sup>1</sup> His contemporary Massillon preached of worldly amusements almost as a clergyman of the Clapham school might have preached<sup>2</sup>: "This world is a society of sinners, whose desires, fears, hopes, cares, projects, joys, and chagrins, no longer turn but upon the successes or misfortunes of this life. This world is an assemblage of people who look upon the earth as their country; the time to come as an exilement; the promises of faith as a dream; and death as the greatest of all misfortunes. . . In a word, to give a proper idea at once of this world, it is the great number [of your fellow-men]. Behold the world which you ought to shun, hate, and combat against by your example! . . . Now, is this your situation in the world? Are its pleasures a fatigue to you; do its excesses afflict your faith; do you regret the length of your pilgrimage here? . . . Are not its laws your laws; its maxims your maxims? What it condemns do not you condemn? Do you not approve what it approves? And should it happen, that you alone were left upon the earth, may we not say, that this corrupted world would be revived in you; and that you would leave an exact model of it to your posterity? When I say *you*, I mean, and I address myself to almost all men. . . You continually demand of us, if theatres, and other public places of amusement, be innocent recreations for Christians? In return I have only one question to ask you. Are they the works of Satan or of Jesus Christ? for there can be no medium in religion. I mean not to say, but what many recreations and amusements may be termed indifferent. But the most indifferent pleasures which religion allows, and which the weakness of our nature renders even necessary, belong in one sense to Jesus Christ, by the facility with which they ought to enable us to apply ourselves to more holy and more serious duties. Everything we do, everything we rejoice or weep at, ought to be of such a nature as to have a connexion with Jesus Christ, and to be done for his glory. Now, upon this principle, the most incontestable, and most universally allowed in Christian morality, you have only to decide whether you can connect the glory of Jesus Christ with the pleasures of a theatre. Can our Saviour have any part in such a species of recreation? And, before you enter them, can you with confidence declare to him that in so doing you only propose his glory, and to enjoy the satisfaction of pleasing him? What! The theatres, such as they are at present, still more criminal by the public licentiousness of those unfortunate creatures who mount them, than by the impure and passionate scenes they

<sup>1</sup> V. Kastner, *Anecdotes Historiques et Littéraires* (Hachette, 1900, p. 52).

<sup>2</sup> *Œuvres*, vol. III, 1810, p. 327. I give, with a few slight verbal corrections, the translation of his sermons published at Edinburgh in 1824 for the use of Protestants.

represent: The theatres are the works of Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ would animate a mouth, from whence are to proceed profane and lascivious airs, intended to corrupt the heart? . . . But these blasphemies strike me with horror. Could Jesus Christ preside in assemblies of sin, where everything we hear weakens his doctrines? where the poison enters into the soul by all the senses? where every art is employed to inspire, awaken, and justify the passions he condemns? Now, says Tertullian, if they are not the works of Jesus Christ, in the sense already indicated (i.e. that they can at least be referred to Jesus Christ), then they must be the works of Satan. 'For' (saith he) 'all that is not God's is the devil's; this, therefore, must be the devil's pomp.' Every Christian, therefore, ought to abstain from them. When he partakes of them he violates the vows of baptism. However innocent he may flatter himself to be, in bringing from these places an untainted heart, it is sullied by being there; since by his presence alone he has participated in the works of Satan, which he had renounced at baptism, and violated the most sacred promises he had made to Jesus Christ, and to his Church. These, my brethren, as I have already told you, are not merely advices and pious arts; they are the most essential of our obligations."

To all these moralists, from Berthold in early Franciscan days, down through Gerson and Massillon to the recent article in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, an unsympathetic critic might apply that bitter sentence which *The London Mercury* printed not long since (Nov. 1920, p. 61). This good priest (it might be said in each case) thunders from his pulpit according to his own conscience; but "he doesn't understand poetry—he has a vague suspicion that it is immoral. He associates gloom with truth. There are myriads of him about." Those words of biting scorn are Mr Belloc's; they voice his indignant revolt against Protestant moralists of our own time. If, by some maligner fate, he had been born in the thirteenth century, what words would he have found to describe the reigning moral theology of that day?

## 24

### WOMEN AND WITCHCRAFT

For the prevalence of witchcraft among women, see Berthold of Regensburg, I, 264-5 and II, 70, 71, 171. "Some deal in betony as a charm, and think by their witchcraft to charm some farmer's son or some day-labourer. Fie, thou foolish slut! wherefore dost thou not charm a count or a king? then shouldst thou be a queen." But reason is lost upon them: "They have so many superstitions that no man may tell them all." If so few village folk come to heaven, that is because the villages are full of witches. "One woman baptizes a waxen image, another a piece of wood, another a dead man's bone, all for working some charm. One bewitches with herbs, another with the holy chrism [used at baptism], another with God's Body. Fie! no Jew would do

that, nor any heathen folk; woe unto thee, that thou wert ever baptized! How doth the devil ensnare thee! She conjures to get a husband, she conjures when she has gotten him, she conjures hither and conjures thither. She conjures before the child is born; she conjures before it is baptized; she conjures after baptism. Now see what thou winnest hereby for thy child, that it must ever be the more full of weariness from all thy conjuring! It is a marvel that her husband falleth not into leprosy from her enchantments!"

A very interesting *exemplum* is used by Herolt to illustrate this and other failings which he considers as specially feminine (*Sermones*, No. cxxv, c *bis*). "Two brothers went abroad preaching, whereof the one was a Papal Penitentiary, and the other an innocent and pious man. At last they were entertained in the castle of a certain noble lady, where they sang Mass; whereat she was rejoiced, and thought within herself, 'Now need I not fear or be ashamed; to these men may I safely make my confession; for they are strangers and unknown.' While then she thus confessed to the elder, the younger saw how, at each sin that she said, an abominable toad went out from her mouth and leapt forth from the church. At length, as she would have confessed one enormous sin, a most terrible dragon began to thrust his head from her mouth; yet then he might not come forth, for shame got the better of her and stifled that confession. Then all those toads that had been cast forth came back unto that terrible dragon, and all went again into her mouth." The lady died suddenly soon afterwards, and her soul appeared to the Penitentiary with this dragon, and other tormenting devils, preying upon it. She explained in detail how each unconfessed sin found its appropriate torment, and he asked her, "'What are those chief sins for which most are damned?' She made answer: 'Men are damned for divers mortal sins, but women chiefly for four sorts: for sins of the tongue, and superfluity of ornament, and witchcraft, and feigned confession through excess of shame.'"

Lancre gives us the experience of a professional witchfinder (pp. 57-9). "There are more women-sorcerers than men; and, albeit this may perchance be one of God's secrets, yet it is true that certain probable reasons may be rendered for this. Bodin saith very truly that it is not on account of the weakness and fragility of that sex, since we see that they suffer torture with more constancy than men, and that they have sometimes been found so obstinately silent on their wicked deeds that, after the death of the tyrant Hippas at Athens, and in Nero's conspiracy, women cut off their own tongues to leave the judges no hope of learning the truth from their mouths; and we ourselves have seen witches at Bayonne suffer the rack with such manly courage and such joy that, after having slumbered awhile amid the torments as in a certain sweetness and delight, they would say that they came from their Paradise, where they had conversed with their Lord. Wherefore it should rather be the force of some bestial cupidity which urgeth and reduceth woman to these extremities whereunto she rusheth of her own free will for the accomplishment of her appetites, or for vengeance, or

for other novelties and curiosities which are to be found in these witches' sabbaths; a thing which hath moved certain philosophers to place woman between man and the brute beast.

"But, lest we be found to blame them for so great defects without due authority, let us note how Plutarch, in his book of the *Tranquillity of Mind*, Strabo in the first book of his *Geography*, Diodorus in the fifth book of his *Deeds of the Ancients*, and St Austin in the third book of his *City of God*, do all testify that woman hath this evil inclination to be more obstinate than man; which, as they say, proceedeth from this, that faithlessness and ambition and pride and lechery reign more among women than among men. Whereunto Titus Livius addeth, that the first use of poisons and venoms, and the exercise of all sorts of superstitions, came from women. It is very true, therefore, that the Evil Spirit draweth the light spirit of woman more easily than man's spirit unto superstition and idolatry; wherefore we read in the great book of Genesis that the devil's doctrine, in the world's beginning, was sooner taught to Eve than to Adam; and she, rather than he, was seduced by Satan in form of a serpent. . . So it is true, after this first example of Eve, that the woman doth always more easily make a sorcerer of her husband, than the husband of his wife. Moreover, God hath willed to weaken Satan; which, as is well known, He hath done by giving him first a reign of his own, and by giving him power over the less worthy creatures, as serpents; or the weaker, as insects; then over other brute beasts rather than the human race; and then over women; and then over men who live like beasts, rather than over the rest who live like men."

## 25

## OVIDIUS MORALIZATUS

A few extracts from this book, which had a considerable vogue, will show that the authors of the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum* had no need to caricature it, and will throw significant sidelights on medieval religious education. The Prologue begins: "Some men shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables, as saith St Paul, that preacher and waterer of the Christian faith (2 Tim. iv, 4). Which word may be thus expounded, that we must oftentimes make use of fables and enigmas and poems, that some moral sense may be extracted therefrom; so that even falsehood may be made a servant unto truth. For thus we see Holy Scripture to have done in many places, where it is recognized to have fabricated fables for the proving of some truth; as for example in the Book of Judges (cap. ix) that fable of the trees that would have chosen a king. . . Therefore natural truth lurketh sometimes under fables, as for example the story of Vulcan who was born of Juno and cast down from heaven to earth, and was fabled to have been lamed by his fall. For Juno signifieth the air, which doth indeed give birth to Vulcan (that is, to this earthly fire of ours), and which by the dashing of two rain-clouds casteth such fire unto the earth; and he may be called



lame, for that a flame goeth ever in a tortuous track." Therefore we must make a moral use of these ancient pagan fables, even as Moses spoiled the pagan Egyptians. He has heard that Ovid was long since moralized in French verse for Jeanne queen of France, but he regrets that he has never been able to find the book. He has therefore done his best with the help of Petrarch, Fulgentius, Alexander [Neckam?] and Rabanus Maurus.

Certainly many of the author's moralizations are strange to modern ideas; some of the riskiest are reproduced, almost without exaggeration, in the *Epistolæ Obscurorum Virorum*<sup>1</sup>. Jupiter and Europa signifies the dealings of God with the human soul, and our author quotes Ps. xlv, 11. "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thine ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty"<sup>2</sup>. The story of Bacchus is even more startling. "Bacchus, who intoxicateth men, is the type of true faith, intoxicating the servants of Christ with the fervour of devotion. Semele signifieth the Jewish people; by the nymphs [who found the new born babe] I understand the Gentiles and heathen. I say therefore that from the first Jupiter is God the Father, who filled Semele (*i.e.* the Synagogue) with Bacchus (*i.e.* with burning faith) and gave this faith to her alone, as it is written in Amos (iii, 2), 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth.' . . . Or let us say that Bacchus is Christ, who [like Bacchus] is called *born of fire* and *twice-born*; as it is written in Deuteronomy iv, 24: 'The Lord our God is a consuming fire.' Twice-born, again, of His Father as touching his Godhead and of His Mother as touching His manhood. He therefore thus wreathed with ivy<sup>3</sup> (that is, with human flesh), is handed over to the nymphs (that is, to holy souls) in the Sacrament of the Altar; by them He is devoutly received through faith, and nourished with the milk of devotion. Wherefore God the Father or the Virgin Mary may say to the soul those words of Exodus (ii, 9): 'Take this child away and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages.'"

Take, again (lib. II, fab. x m), the story of Callisto, the nymph whom Jupiter seduced by taking upon himself the form of her mistress Diana. "Et ad ethera victor iterum ascendit." "Thus Jupiter (that is, the Son of God, blessed from the beginning of the world) loved fervently that fairest of damsels Callisto (that is the soul of man). Wherefore, that he might win it and join Himself to it by faith and charity, He took upon Himself a woman's dress and face (that is, the flesh and shape of a man); for He 'was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man' (Phil. ii, 7). And thus He redeemed that damsel from the thicket of wicked thorns (that is, from hell) and joined her to Himself. And at last he ascended back to the heaven whence he came, saying (Matt. xii, 44), 'I will return into my house from whence I came out.'" Here, again,

<sup>1</sup> Bk I, chap. 28 (ed. Stokes, 1909, p. 74).

<sup>2</sup> Lib. II, fab. xxiii h. Myrrha's father, again, is a type of Christ! (lib. x, fab. ix p).

<sup>3</sup> The regular attribute of Bacchus.

are the author's moralizations on the fable of Tityus (*De Plutone, ad fin.*): "Say that the vultures [which preyed upon Tityus] are the devils and death and infernal torments which devour and consume the damned Fate stands for God's justice and providence which keepeth them immortal that they may be the more tormented, and which repaireth and restoreth them by resurrection at the last; as the Psalmist saith (xlviii, 9), 'He shall labour for ever, and shall still live unto the end.'" Or Pygmalion, again (lib. x, fab. x r). The sculptor is like a preacher, whose work it is to form beautiful souls. "But it cometh oftentimes to pass that some good Pygmalion (that is, some good Religious) proposeth to himself to shun women and carnal embraces for ever; and such a man setteth himself to making images of ivory (that is, to teach kindly nuns and matrons in chastity and holiness, and to chisel them in spiritual conduct), and it cometh to pass at some time that he chooseth one among the rest, whom he calleth *sister* or *daughter*, and cleaveth to her and toucheth her with good and chaste mind and affection. But of a surety—*pro certo*—it befalleth at last that Venus the Goddess of lechery (*i.e.* concupiscency) interposeth, and bringeth that dead statue to life, and inspireth that chaste woman with lascivious impulses and changeth her from a good to a foolish woman. For Pygmalion himself, the preacher, prayeth Venus for this change. Thus, then, when they return to their accustomed converse, they find each other changed; for her ivory now is flesh, and he, who shrank from women, beginneth to desire the filth of the flesh. Thus do these carnal folk now take each other and sometimes beget children. Wherefore it is not safe for a Religious to contract too great familiarity with women, or for a nun with men. Wherefore it is said in Ecclesiasticus (ix, 8), 'Turn away thy face from a woman dressed up, and gaze not upon another's beauty; for many have perished by the beauty of a woman, and hereby lust is enkindled as a fire.' And again, a little before: 'Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling block unto thee.'"

26

JOHN SCHORN AND MAID UNCUMBER

(a) Schorn

An excellent bibliographical note on this curious medieval saint will be found on p. 105 of H. Druitt, *Costume on Brasses*, 1906. All sufficient facts about him may be gleaned from three articles by Mr W. S. Simpson in *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, vols. 23 (1867), 25 (1869) and 41 (1885).

John Schorn became rector of N. Marston, Bucks, in 1290; he may have been also a monk of Christchurch, Canterbury. He struck his staff upon the earth, and brought forth a spring which was renowned through the Middle Ages for curing scorbutic and cutaneous diseases and agues. "So large were the offerings of the devotees, that in 1478

Richard Beauchamp, Bishop of Salisbury and Dean of Windsor, obtained a licence from Pope Sixtus IV that he might remove the shrine where he pleased, and he accordingly did remove it to Lincoln Chapel, in the chapel of St George, in Windsor Castle. The windows of the chancel long retained part of the history of the saint; and in one of them was his effigy with a boot under his arm into which he was squeezing a little puppet in the likeness of Satan as he is vulgarly portrayed" (vol. 23, p. 259). His cult was quoted by many Reformers among the most conspicuous popular superstitions; Bale couples "Master John Shorne's



Sir John Schorn.

boot" with "Maid Uncumber's oats." His fame was widespread; he appears among the chosen saints on the roodscreens of Gateley, Suffield and Cawston in Norfolk and of Woolborough in Devon; and the fragment of stained glass represented here in the text probably came from Bury St Edmund's Abbey. The offerings at his Windsor shrine are said to have amounted to £500 a year (vol. 25, p. 342); and, in 1537 the Bishop of London, who was a commissioner for pulling down superstitious pictures, wrote to his principals that he had found "at Marston Mr Johan Schorn blessing a boot, whereunto they do say he conveyed the devil"; he promised to send this up to London for destruction (*ibid.* 336). His well at Marston was inscribed (according to tradition)

S<sup>r</sup> John Shorn  
Gentleman born  
Conjured the Devil into a boot<sup>1</sup>;

and it retained its reputation so long that, even about 1730, the sign-post at a cross-road near Marston bore the legend "To Sir John Schorn" (*ibid.* 343). A Latin office was composed in view of his canonization, and the episcopal and papal approval of his cult in 1478 would distinctly legitimate all prayers to him.

#### (b) *St Uncumber*

This story is told at considerable length in AA.SS. Boll. Jul. v, 50 (ed. 1868); still more fully, apparently, in a monograph which I have not seen, by L. A. J. W. Sloet (The Hague, 1884).

According to the legend which was composed for this saint's office, but which the Bollandists decline to accept as an historical document, Liberata was daughter to a pagan king of Portugal, and God gave her a flowing beard—*prolixam barbam*—in response to her prayer that she

<sup>1</sup> Did not this originally run "into a horn"?



CRUCIFIX AT ROMSEY ABBEY



might be delivered from the nuptial importunities of a king of Sicily; she was finally crucified for her public profession of Christianity and her determination to preserve her virginity<sup>1</sup>. In France she was called *Ste Wilgeforte* (*Virgo-fortis*?) and in the Netherlands and Germany, *Sankt Onkommer*. The Bollandists seem to prove conclusively that some of the representations ascribed to her in the later Middle Ages are really copies of the celebrated Christ of Lucca, in which, as in the most ancient crucifixes, Jesus is represented as robed to the ancles. She was worshipped under her different names in Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Bohemia and England.

In Germany, her cult and her bearded image survived at Saalfeld, apparently, until comparatively recent times; see J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsche Sagen*, I (1816), 426. Mr J. W. Horsley (*Ch. Times*, Jan. 14, 1921) quotes from English parochial records; at the Kentish village of Cowden, in 1524, John Wickenden bequeathed money for an alabaster image of her and a light to burn before it in the church; about the same date, John Hyrning bequeathed 12d. to St Uncumber's light at St Giles's, Norwich, and St Peter's in the same city had, among its vestments "two of Maide Uncumber's best cotes and an orfrey of green damask. . . item, a cote of Maide Uncumber of redde silk." Mr Horsley adds: "Michael Nodde, who wrote in 1554, says: 'If a wife were weary of a husband she offered oats at Poules in London to St Uncumber,'" while there is still, I believe, a statue of her in Henry VII's chapel in Westminster Abbey. Her office in the Sarum breviary lays stress on the miracle of the beard:

Crevit barba facie, quod obtinuisti

A Christo pro munere quod sibi<sup>2</sup> voluisti,

Te volentes nubere sibi<sup>2</sup> confudisti.

Her worship in England is described by the Messenger in Sir Thomas More's *Dialogue* (bk II, chap. 10, *English Works*, 1557, p. 194 b). He rehearses the specialties attributed to various saints; "Saint Germaine [serves] only for chyl dren; and yet wyll he not ones look at them, but if the mother bring with them a white lofe and a pot of good ale. And yet is he wiser then saint Wilgefort, for the good soule is as thei saye serued and content with otes. Wherof I can not perceiue the reason,

<sup>1</sup> The probability is that the whole story grew up, like many others, from popular ignorance of ecclesiastical symbolism. When the naked crucifix with the three nails became fashionable, the old clothed crucifixes with four nails were taken for female figures, and a legend invented to account for them.

<sup>2</sup> *Sic*.



Maid Uncumber.

but if it be bicause she should prouide an horse for an euyl housbonde to ryde to the deuyll upon, for that is the thyng that she is so sought for as they saie. In so much that women hathe therefore chaunged her name, and in stede of saint Wilgeforte call her saynt Uncumber, bicause they reken that for a pecke of Otes she will not faile to uncomber them of their housbondes. Longe worke were it to reherse you the diuers maner of manye pretty pylgrimages, but one or two wil I tell you. The one Pontanus spekyth of in his dialoges<sup>1</sup>, how saint Martin is worshipped, I have forgot the towne, but the maner I can not forget, it is so straunge. Hys image is on hys daye borne in procession about al the stretes. And, if it be a fayre day, then use they as he cometh by, to cast rose water and al thinges of pleasant sauour upon his ymage. But and it happen to raine, out poure they pis-pottes upon his hed, at euery dore and euery window. Is not this a swete seruice and a worshipfull worship? And this as I say Pontanus writeth and telleth where it is. But this that I shal now tell you, I dare as boldly make you sure of, as if I had sene it my self. At saint Waleries here in Picardy, there is a faire abbey, where saint Walery was monk. And upon a furlonge [of] or two, up in a wood is there a chapel, in which that saint is specially sought unto for the stone, not only in those parties, but also out of England. . . Is this kind of seruyce and worship acceptable and pleasant unto God and hys sayntes? Now when peple worship saintes in such wise that they make them felowes to God and images in such wise that they take them for the saint's self, and then again on the other side honour them with such superstitious wayes that the painim gods were worshipped with no worse, finally (that worst is of al), pray to them for unfeleful thinges as Theues praye to the thefe that honge on the ryght side of Christe to spede them well in their robbery, and haue found him a name also, calling him Dismas I wene and his fellow Gismas to rime withall, thinke you not that this gere is such among the people as rather were likely so to prouoke God and his saints to displeasure that the deuil should haue licence and liberty therfore to worke his wonders in delusion of our suspicious idolatry, than so to like and content our Lorde that he should shew miracles for the comprobation of that maner of worshipping whyche wee maye well perceiue."

To this More replies in his own person (chap. 11), arguing that the people really do distinguish the saint from the image; and that even an ignorant woman, "if ye wold aske her whether it wer our Lady of Ipswicke or our Lady of Walsingham that stode by the crosse at Christys passion, she will (I warant you) make aunswere that neyther of bothe. . . Nowe as touching the thyrd poynt of superstitious maner of worshipping, or unlawful petitions desired by saintes, as one sample may serue both, if women offer otes to Saint Wilgefote to haue her uncomber them of theyr housbondes somewhat is it in dede that ye saye,

<sup>1</sup> The reference apparently is to J. J. Pontanus (1426-1503), philosopher, poet, orator and historian; secretary to Kings Alphonso II and Ferdinand II of Naples.

and yet not all thinge to be blamed that ye seeme to blame. For as to pray to Saint Appoline for the helpe of our teth is no witchecraft considering that she had her teth pulled out for Christes sake. Nor there is no supersticion in suche other thynges lyke. And peradventure sith saint Loy was a ferroure, it is no greate faute to praye to him for the helpe of our horse. . . But as for your teth I wene if thei asked wel ye wolde your selfe think it a thing worthy and not to simple to aske helpe of Saint Appolin and of God to[o]. Yea, Mary, quoth he, and of the deuill to rather than faile, as that Lumbarde did for the goute. That when he had longe called upon God and our Lady and all the holy company of heuen and yet felt him self never the better, he began at last to cal as fast for help unto the deuill. And when his wyfe and his frendes, sore abashed and astonied, rebuked hym for callinge on ye deuill, which he wist wel was nought and if that he holpe hym it should be for no good, he cried out as lowde as he could agayne, *ogni<sup>1</sup> aiuto è bono*, al is good that helpeth. And so I wene wold I, quoth he, cal on the deuill and all, rather than abide in payne. Nay, quoth I, what so euer ye say I can not thinke ye woulde beleue in the deuill as that Lumbard dyd. Ye woulde rather fare like another, that whan the frere apposed hym in confession whither he medleth anything with witchcrafte or negromancy, or had any beleue in the deuill, he answered him, *Credere en le diable mysir no, Io graund fatigue a credere in dio*. Beleue in the deuill, quoth he, nai, nai, syr, I haue work ynough to beleue in God. And so wold I wene that ye were far from al beleuing in the deuill, ye haue so much worke to beleue in God himselve, that ye bee loth me think to medle much with his saintes. When he had laughed awhile at our mery tales, In good faith, quoth I, as I was aboute to tell you, somewhat in dede it is that ye say, For evil it is, and evil it is suffered that superstitious maner of worship, And as for that ye told of St. Martin, if it be trew it hath none excuse, but that its nothing toucheth our matter. For it is not of worshipping, but dispyting and disworshipping of saintes. Touchinge the offring of bread and ale to St. Germin, I se nothing much misse therein, where ye haue sene it used I cannot tel. But I haue myself sene often tymes, and yet am I not remembered that ever I sawe priest or clarke fare the better therfore, or ones drinke therof, but it is given to children or pore folke to pray for the syck chyld. And I would wene it were none offence in such fashion, to offer up an hole Oxe and distribute it among pore people. But nowe as for our mery matters of St Wallery, because the place is in France we shall leue the matter to the universitye of Parys to defend. And we wyll come home here to Poules, and put one ensample of both, that is to say the superstitious manner and unfulf petitions, if women there offer otes unto St. Wilgefort, in tru[st] that she shall uncumber them of their husbands. Yet can neither the priestes perceive tyll thei finde it ther, that the folishe women bring otes thither, nor it is not I think so often done nor so much brought at once, that the church may make much mony of it above the finding of the chanons horses. Nay, quoth he, all the otes of an

<sup>1</sup> Text has *bogni*.



hole year's offering wil not finde iii gees and a gander a weke toghether. Well, quoth I, then the priestes mayntayne not the matter for any great covetise, and also what the pe[e]uish women prey thei can not heare. Howbeit if they pray but to be uncombred, me semeth no great harme, nor unlesfulnes therin. For that may thei by no wayes than one. Thei may bee uncombred if their housbondes chaunge their comberous condicions. Or if them self per adventure chaunge their comberous tongues, which is happely the cause of all their combraunce. And finally if they cannot be uncombred but by death, yet it may be by their owne, and so their housbondes saufe inough. Nay, nay, quoth he, ye find them not such foles, I warrant you. Thei make their covenants in their bitter praiers as surely as they were pennyd, and wil not cast away their otes for nought. Well, quoth I, to al these maters is one evident easye aunswere, that thei nothing touch the effect of our matter, which standeth in this, whether the thing that we speke of, as praying to saints going in pilgrimage, and worshiping relykes and images, may be done wel: not whether it may be done euill. For if it maye bee wel done, then though many wold misse-use it, yet doth al that nothing minishe the goodnes of the thyng selfe. For if we should for the misseuse of a good thinge and for the euilles that grow somtyme in the abuse therof, not amende that misseuse but utterly put the hole use awai, we should then make mervailous chaunges in the world. In some countries they go on hunting commonly on Good Friday in the morning for a common custom. Wyll ye breke that evyll custome or cast away Good Friday? There be cathedrall churches into which the country cometh with procession at Whytsontyde, and the women folowing the crosse with many an unwomanly songe, that such honest wyves as out of the procession ye could not heare to speake one such foule rybaudrie worde as thei there synge for gods sake hole rybaudous songes, as lowd as theyr throte can cry. Wil you mende that lewde maner, or put away Whytsontyde? Ye speak of lewdnes used at pilgrimages. Is ther (trow ye) none used on holy daies. And why doe you not then aduise us to put them clene away, sondayes and all? Some waxe dronke in Lent of wigges and craknels<sup>1</sup>, and yet ye would not I truste that Lent were fordone. Christmas, if we consider how commonly men abuse it, we may thinke that thei take it for a time of liberty for al maner of lewdnes. And yet is not Christmas to be cast away among cristen men, but men rather monished to amende their maner, and use them self in Christmas more christenly. Go men<sup>2</sup> to christes owne coming and giving us our faith and his holy ghospel and sacraments. Be there not ten the worse therfore against one the better? Be not al the painims, al the Jewes, al the turks, al the sarasins, al the heritikes, al the evil living people in christendom the worse by theyr owne faut for the coming of Christ? I trow thei be. And yet would no wise man wishe that Christ had not commen here. Nor it had be no right that God should have lefte the occasion of meryte and rewarde that good folke woulde wyth hys helpe

<sup>1</sup> Wigges were a kind of fancy bread which, like cracknels, were often consumed to stay the drinker's stomach.

<sup>2</sup> Text, *me*.

deserve by hys commynge, for the harme that wretches wold take therof by ther owne slouth and malyce. Nor in likewise right were it none that all worship of saintes and reverence of holy relykes and honour of saintes ymages (by which good devout folk do much meryte) we shoud abolishe and put away bycause some folke do abuse it. Nowe touching the evyll petitions, though thei that aske them were as I trust thei be not a great people, they be not yet so many that aske evyll petitions of saintes, as there be that aske the same of God himself. For whatsoever thei wyll aske of any good saint, they wyl aske of God also. And comenly in the wild Yrishe, and some in Wales too, as men say, when thei go forth in robbing, they blisse them and pray God send them good spede that they may mete with a good purse, and doo harme and take none. Shal we therfore finde a faute with every man's prayer bycause theves pray for spede in robbery? This hath as I saye no reason although they were a great peple that abused a good thing. And where as the worst that ye assign in our matter is that as ye saye the people do ydolatrie, in that ye saye thei take the ymages for the saintes self or the roode for Christ himself, which as I said I think none doth (for some roode hath no crucifixe theron, and they beleve not that the crosse which thei see was ever at Jerusalem, nor that it was the holy cross it selfe, and much lesse thinke thei then that the ymage that hangeth theron is the body of Christ himself), and although some were so mad so to thinke, yet were it not, as ye cal it, the peple. For a fewe doting dames make not the people. And over this if it were as ye wold have it some an hole people in dede, yet were not a good thinge to be put away for the misseuse of bad folke."

## 27

## MONKS AND BATHS

We may begin with St Jerome's panegyric on the anchorite Hilarion: "He cut his hair once a year, on Easter Day. . . When once he had clad himself in sackcloth, he never washed it, saying that it was superfluous to seek cleanliness in sackcloth" (P.L. vol. 23, col. 32). Eight centuries later, the very human Archbishop Odo Rigaldi reports thus on a small priory at Neufchâtel-en-Bray. "The Prior hath often sojourned alone in a certain manor-house; and there he hath oftentimes bathed; and there was a certain suspected woman dwelling in the same place" (*Regestrum*, p. 139). This bathing was a worldly indulgence in any case, and only too easily connected with more serious lapses.

Long before Benedict, St Augustine took the same line in those precepts for cloistered life which became the foundation of the Augustinian and Dominican Rules. Chap. ix forbids excessive care in washing of garments, "lest a too great desire for cleanliness of vesture infect your soul with inward uncleanness." The saint goes on: "Let permission not be refused to wash even the body also in baths, when sick-

ness renders this necessary. Let this be done by advice of the doctor, and without murmur, so that, even though the Brother be unwilling, he may yet do, at his superior's bidding, that which he ought to do for his health. If however he desire to bathe, and it be perchance not to his advantage, then let not this desire be humoured." St Benedict's prescription was interpreted as practically prohibitive of all public baths and of swimming in river, sea, or lake. It is true that the public baths of medieval and renascence times had not a good name; see Poggio's well-known description of the baths at Baden, and a great deal of other evidence collected in W. Rudeck's *Gesch. d. Oeff. Sittlichkeit* (1897). But the prescriptions of different monastic disciplinarians on this subject form such an interesting chapter in the social history of the Middle Ages, that I print them here from Martène's commentary on this chap. xxxvi (pp. 473 ff.):

- Non quidem publica sed privata. "Quod autem de balneorum usu infirmis concedendo hic statuit S. P. Benedictus, de balneis privatis & domesticis intelligendum, non de publicis; neque enim ita expedit Monachis vagandi foras; raroque offendes aliquos tum veteres, tum recentiores Monachos, apud quos aliquod honestatis aut religionis studium viguerit, hujusmodi balneis usos fuisse: 'Natationes, & lotiones corporum in mari, fluminibus, stagnis, vel similibus aquis tanquam parum honestas, periculosas omnino omnibus personis nostri Ordinis prohibemus,' inquit Cartusienses in nova Collect. Statut. Et Cistercienses: 'Si quae vero moniales ad balnea extra monasteria processerint, irremissibiliter priventur habitu regulari: licentiantes autem, ut praedicta petant balnea, sententiam excommunicationis incurrant.' Huicce statuto occasionem forte dederit S. Hieronymus ad Laetam scribens in haec verba: 'Mihi omnino in adulta virgine lavacra displicent, quae seipsam debet erubescere, & nudam videre non posse; si enim vigiliis & jejuniis macerat corpus suum, & in servitutum redigit, si flammam libidinis, & incentiva ferventis aetatis extinguere cupit continentiae frigore, si appetitis sordibus turpare festinat naturalem pulcritudinem, cur è contrario balnearum fomentis sopitos ignes suscitatur?'
- Caput xxxvi. hic statuit S. P. Benedictus, de balneis privatis & domesticis intelligendum, non de publicis; neque enim ita expedit Monachis vagandi foras; raroque offendes aliquos tum veteres, tum recentiores Monachos, apud quos aliquod honestatis aut religionis studium viguerit, hujusmodi balneis usos fuisse: 'Natationes, & lotiones corporum in mari, fluminibus, stagnis, vel similibus aquis tanquam parum honestas, periculosas omnino omnibus personis nostri Ordinis prohibemus,' inquit Cartusienses in nova Collect. Statut. Et Cistercienses: 'Si quae vero moniales ad balnea extra monasteria processerint, irremissibiliter priventur habitu regulari: licentiantes autem, ut praedicta petant balnea, sententiam excommunicationis incurrant.' Huicce statuto occasionem forte dederit S. Hieronymus ad Laetam scribens in haec verba: 'Mihi omnino in adulta virgine lavacra displicent, quae seipsam debet erubescere, & nudam videre non posse; si enim vigiliis & jejuniis macerat corpus suum, & in servitutum redigit, si flammam libidinis, & incentiva ferventis aetatis extinguere cupit continentiae frigore, si appetitis sordibus turpare festinat naturalem pulcritudinem, cur è contrario balnearum fomentis sopitos ignes suscitatur?'
- Part. 2, c. 14. Sanis tardius concedenda. Haec fuit constans & sana sanctorum Patrum doctrina. S. Athanasius: 'Si morbus exigit, inquit, una aut altera vice lavationem adhibe; sospes autem balneo non indiget.'
- Novell. defin. dist. 14, cap. 2. S. Hieronymus: 'Balnearum fomenta non quaerit, qui calorem corporis jejuniorum cupit frigore extinguere.' S. Isidorus agens de Monachis: 'Lavacris utantur numquam delectatione corporis; sed raro propter necessitatem languoris'; & in Regula 'Lavacra nulli Monacho adeunda studio lavandi corporis, nisi tantummodo pro necessitate languoris.' S. Caesarius in Regula ad Sanctimoniales:
- Epist. 7. Sanis tardius concedenda. Haec fuit constans & sana sanctorum Patrum doctrina. S. Athanasius: 'Si morbus exigit, inquit, una aut altera vice lavationem adhibe; sospes autem balneo non indiget.'
- Sanis tardius concedenda. Haec fuit constans & sana sanctorum Patrum doctrina. S. Athanasius: 'Si morbus exigit, inquit, una aut altera vice lavationem adhibe; sospes autem balneo non indiget.'
- Syntag. doctrin. ad Mon. S. Hieronymus: 'Balnearum fomenta non quaerit, qui calorem corporis jejuniorum cupit frigore extinguere.' S. Isidorus agens de Monachis: 'Lavacris utantur numquam delectatione corporis; sed raro propter necessitatem languoris'; & in Regula 'Lavacra nulli Monacho adeunda studio lavandi corporis, nisi tantummodo pro necessitate languoris.' S. Caesarius in Regula ad Sanctimoniales:
- Epist. 4. Lib. 2, de offic. eccles. cap. 15. Sanis tardius concedenda. Haec fuit constans & sana sanctorum Patrum doctrina. S. Athanasius: 'Si morbus exigit, inquit, una aut altera vice lavationem adhibe; sospes autem balneo non indiget.'
- Cap. 20. Sanis tardius concedenda. Haec fuit constans & sana sanctorum Patrum doctrina. S. Athanasius: 'Si morbus exigit, inquit, una aut altera vice lavationem adhibe; sospes autem balneo non indiget.'

- Cap. 29. 'Lavacra cujus infirmitas exposcit minime denegentur. . . si autem nulla infirmitate compellitur, cupiditati suae non praebeatur assensus.' S. Leander: 'Balneo non pro studio vel nitore utaris corporis, sed tantum pro remedio salutis. Utere, inquam, lavacro quando poscit infirmitas, non quando suaserit voluntas. . . Non te illiciat lavare saepius carnis voluptas, sed infirmitatis imperet necessitas.'
- De Instit.  
Virg. c. 10. S. Petrus Damiani: 'Balneis, si fuerint incolumes, non utuntur.' Et quidem ea de re laudant S. Tattonem in vita S. Paldonis num. 17, S. Pardulfum in ejus vita num. 5, S. Opportunam Abbatisam in ejus vita num. 8, saec. 3, et S. Popponem in ejus item vita num. 59, apud Boll. 25 Januar.
- Olim Bene-  
dictini bis aut  
ter in anno bal-  
neabant.  
In Regul. cap.  
12. Non defuere tamen ex priscis Monachis, qui balnea etiam quandoque frequentarent; nam & S. Augustinus Virginibus illud *semel in mense* concedit; sed neque S. Benedictus illud sanis omnino negat, sed tantum, inquit, *tardius concedantur*, quod tardius ita exponit Hildemar: 'Alii sunt qui istud tardius tribus vicibus intelligunt in anno debere fieri praeparata, id est in Nativitate Domini, & in Pascha, & in Pentecosten; alii sunt qui duabus vicibus, id est in Nativitate, & in Pascha, quod rectius est.' Alium tamen tradit idem Hildemar hujus loci sensum, ut nimirum inquinatis ex aliquo manuum opere balnea concedantur, quamvis tardius, & juvenibus plus tardius. Sed conformior est prior sensus antiquae Ordinis nostri consuetudini, cujus praxim videre est in vita S. Juniani Abbatis, de quo Wlfridus Boetius: 'Balnea corpori vix in anno semel adhibebantur'; in vita S. Amati Abbatis Habendensis: 'qui balnearum fomentis bis tantum ibidem utebatur in anno; ante sanctum videlicet Natalis Domini diem, ejusque sacrae Resurrectionis Pascha'; apud Bedam de S. Edildrida Abbatisa ita scribentem: 'Raroque in calidis balneis praeter imminentibus solemniis majoribus, v.g. Paschae, Pentecostes, Epiphaniae lavari voluerit.' Ritus descripsimus in lib. 3. de Antiquis Monachorum Ritibus cap. 2. Praeterea lotionem usos fuisse propter nocturnam illusionem colligi posse videtur ex Hildemari Comment. in Regul. cap. 22, ex Regula S. Isidori in qua praescribitur, ut 'qui nocturno delusus phantasmate fuerit, tempore officii in sacrario stabit, nec audebit eadem die ecclesiam introire antequam sit lotus, & aquis, & lacrymis.' Atque ad has consuetudines referre oportet quod de balneatoriis reperitur apud Cassiodorum in lib. Divin. Lect. c. 29, in Ingulfi Histor. Croylandensi, in antiqua monasterii S. Galli delineatione, in antiquis Farnensis monasterii Consuet. & alibi passim. Vide Haefst. lib. 11. Tract. 5. disq. 7."
- Opusc. 15,  
cap. 18.
- Caput xxxvi.  
Saec. 1, Ben.  
Saec. 2, Ben.
- Lib. 4, Hist.  
Angl. c. 19.
- Cap. 14.

St Udalric of Augsburg, to take a distinguished example from the tenth century, was accustomed to bathe thrice a year, at the beginning, middle and end of Lent (Mabillon, AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. v, p. 429). Some five generations later, it was counted among the special claims to sanctity of St Norbert, founder of the Premonstratensians, that "he ate no flesh and took no baths" (Winter, *Prämonstratenser*, p. 266). A contemporary founder of a new congregation, St Bernard of Tiron, was advised by the doctors, in his last illness, to take a bath; he stoutly refused, saying, "Wherefore, I beseech you, would ye persuade me to violate, at my last end, that strict profession which I have ever kept till now?" (P.L. vol. 172, col. 1431). He lived and died in loyalty to St Jerome's maxim: "Dost thou complain that thy skin, without bath, is rough and wrinkled? But when a man hath once been washed in Christ, there is no need that he should wash again" (Ep. 14; P.L. vol. 22, col. 354; the allusion is to John xiii, 9, 10). St Vigilius of Salzburg "never would use a bath, lest the constancy of his mind which he showed himself able to maintain by treading carnal lusts underfoot, should become less hardened also to martyrdom." St Etheldreda of Ely bathed only thrice a year; "for she who was so clean-washed in heart needed not to be washed in body"; St Amand again, only twice a year; St Pardulfus refused ever to bathe except in cases of illness; St Benedict of Aniane never bathed during the first two years of his "conversion." (AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. II (1669), pp. 58, 131, 755; Saec. III, pars i (1672), p. 575; Saec. IV, pars i (1677), p. 195; cf. 214.)

## 28

## THE VISION OF WETTIN

This vision is of capital importance, because so many monastic generations cherished and repeated it as classical. Wettin was Scholasticus at the great monastery of Reichenau, and chroniclers date his revelation in 824. He was rapt in the Spirit for three days, saw a vision of heaven and hell, and dictated his experiences immediately after recovering his senses. Hetto, Hatto, or Hayto, Abbot of Reichenau and Bishop of Bâle, drew up at once a prose narrative of these events; and next year the famous Walafrid Strabo, who had been Wettin's pupil, turned it into verse. The prose is in Mabillon, AA.SS.O.S.B. Saec. IV, p. 1, and Migne, P.L. vol. 105, col. 769; Walafrid's verse is in P.L. vol. 114, col. 1065. Nearly three centuries later, William of Malmesbury reproduced this vision in an abbreviated form in his collection of Mary-legends; the portions which he chose to retain, and which he expressed again after his own fashion, gain an added historical value. The present appendix contains those extracts from both the original Wettin and the Malmesbury recension which throw most light on clerical and monastic conditions in the early ninth and late eleventh centuries.

(a) Migne, col. 773 d.

His igitur dictis, assumpsit eum idem angelus, et duxit per viam amenitatis immensitate praeclaram: in qua dum pergerent, ostendit ei montes immensae altitudinis et incredibilis pulchritudinis, qui quasi essent marmorei videbantur, quos circumibat maximus fluvius igneus, in quo innumerabilis multitudo damnatorum poenaliter inclusa tenebatur, quorum multos se agnovisse fatebatur; et in caeteris locis, innumeris tormentis diversi generis cruciatis aspexerat: in quibus plurimos tam minoris quam majoris ordinis sacerdotes stantes, dorso stipitibus inhaerentes, in igne stricte loris ligatos viderat: ipsas quoque feminas ab eis stupratas, simili modo constrictas ante eos, in eodem igne usque ad loca genitalium dimersas. Dictumque est ei ab angelo, quod sine intermissione, uno die tantum intermisso, die tertia, semper in locis genitalibus virgis caederentur. Plures eorum suae agnitioni notos dicebat. Sacerdotum, inquit angelus, maxima pars mundanis lucris inhiando, et palatinis curis inserviando, cultu vestium et pompa ferulorum se extollendo, quaestum putant esse et pietatem. Animabus lucrandis non invigilant. Deliciis affluentes in scorta proruunt; et ita evenit, ut nec sibi, nec aliis intercessores esse possint. Saeculo enim pestilentia et fame laboranti sua prece succurrere potuissent, si lucrum Deo tota virtute conferre voluissent. Et ideo tali remuneratione in fine damnantur, quia praecedentibus meritis talia patiuntur. . . [col. 777 c]. Post haec inde recedentes, coepit ei angelus exponere in quantis vitiorum sordibus volutatur humanitas. Licet enim, inquit, in diversas criminum numerositates ab auctore suo recedat humanum genus, diabolo se mancipando, in nullo tamen Deus magis offenditur, quam cum contra naturam peccatur. Et ideo multa vigilantia certandum est omnibus locis, ne scelere sodomitico Dei habitaculum vertatur in delubra daemonum. . . [778 b]. In coenobiis etenim monachorum admonendum est, ut vitiorum radicibus arefactis, virtutum possint germina pullulare: quia majoris numeri frequentia reperitur eorum, qui mundanis necessitatibus, quam qui Spiritu Dei ad haec spiritalia castra se conferant. Animalis enim homo non percipit ea quae sunt Spiritus Dei. Et ideo certandum est totis viribus, ne multitudine carnalium tepescat vita spiritalium, ne abundante iniquitate refrigescat charitas multorum. Caveatur avaritia: qua dominante non descenditur ad paupertatem spiritus, qua coelorum aditus obseratur. Ciborum et potus ingluvies vertatur in vix sufficientem victus necessitatem. Aqua, inquit, valde ad potandum utilis est, quia naturalis potus est. Nitor vestium mutetur in necessarium arcendae nuditatis et frigoris temperamentum. Superbiae tumor mutandus est in humilitatem non fictam. In quibusdam enim videtur cervicis inflexio, sed non deponitur in eis cordis erectio. In hoc namque maxime ipsa vita apostolici ordinis confunditur, quod virtutes vitiis suffocantur [*Codex Bezae*, fuscantur]. Et dum culpa, quae sub specie pietatis intravit, in usu retinetur, jam quasi pro lege recte vivendi defenditur. Ideoque in occiduis regionibus, Germaniae videlicet et Galliae, istius ordinis homines ut ad veram Christi humilitatem et voluntariam paupertatem informentur, admo-

nendi sunt, ne a janua vitae, Deo haec per me terribiliter pronuntiante, repellantur. Quanta etiam in congregationibus feminarum culpa excreverit, et damnum Deo factum in lucrum diaboli profecerit, ordinatione confusa, non tacuit. Cum enim, inquit angelus, mortuae feminae vivis praeferuntur (quia vidua vivens in deliciis mortua est), mortuis operibus communicando, ex vivis eis subjectae mortuae fiunt. Et dum saecularibus dantur<sup>1</sup> inexplēbilitē opes terrenas sitientes; in terrenas et perituras voluptates ordine confuso vertuntur opes, quae ad conservandam castimoniam coelestis vitae a fidelibus congestae sunt. Et ubi, inquit, illius vitae apostolicae formula incorrupta servatur? In transmarinis, ait, regionibus adhuc apostolici vigoris constantia viget: quia paupertate spiritus praeventi, sine ullius terreni impedimenti obstaculo coelorum regna capessunt. His dictis, iterum atque iterum de scelere sodomitico verbum intulit. Caetera enim vitia vitanda semel tantummodo notavit. Hunc vero pestiferum animae morbum, contra naturam commento diaboli suggestum, quinquies et eo amplius vitandum repetivit. Interrogante autem eo, cur pestilentia grassante tanta populi numerositas interiret: Immensitate, ait, criminum mundo peccante peccatorum punitio est, et signum a Domino est denuntiaturum, praesagio suo demonstrans mundi terminum cito venturum. Admonuit etiam inter caetera, quod celebritas operis Dei tota virtute et diligentia ordine inconfuso sine alicujus taedii aut negligentiae subreptione in ecclesiis ageretur.

(b) A. Mussafia in *Sitzungsberichte d. k. Akad. in Wien*, Phil.-Hist., Bd 123 (1891), p. 39, printed from mss. at Salisbury and Cambridge (William of Malmesbury's version; see pp. 18 ff.).

Tum preterea [angelum] multa super episcopis conquestum dixisse, quod abuterentur non prelationis munere, sed tyrannidis, vite animarum negligentes pericula; multa super comitibus, quod rapacitati dediti iusta iudicia distorqueant, venales linguas circumferant, fortunis miserorum provincialium imminentes; multa super utriusque sexus cenobitis, quod professionis irrisores spectacula diligit, gule assistant, pompe vestimentorum inhiant. Deum omnibus peccatis offendi, illo maxime quo natura leditur, quo pudor contristatur. Id esse in quo preceptum voluptas obliviscitur sexum maxime fugiendum. Cetera venialia; illud Deo abominabile, hominibus dampnabile. Se esse angelum illum, qui olim Sampsonem fortissimum a labe pudicitiae integrum custodisset, sed meretricis amoribus captum et Dalile lenociniis defeneratum destituisset. "Tu quoque," inquit, "in puerili etate pura Deo innocencia placens, set effrenis adolescencie discursibus evagatus, non modice displicuisti. Set nunc iterum penitentiae remediis Deo irascenti occurrens, eum in gratiam revocasti; et crastina quidem migrabis. Set interim certemus pro misericordia."

<sup>1</sup> Others read *damnantur* or *dominantur*; but the present text can be construed if we supply three words from the context: "dum saecularibus [viduis] dantur [regendae sanctimoniales]."

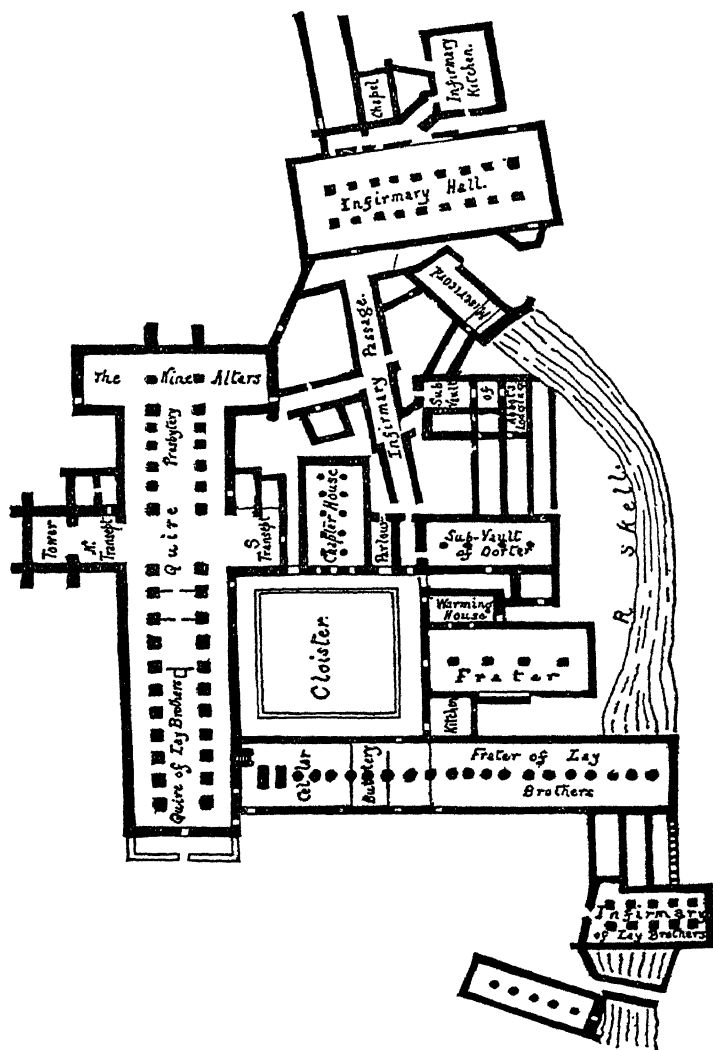
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The original Latin of two episodes in appendix 2 E. (B. Pez, *Thesaurus*, vol. IV (1723), pars III, col. 10, § 5.)

De duobus monachis frater idem datum audivit exemplum, ne quis leviter ducat proprium non habere Patronum. Unus eorum subitanea et improvisa morte praeventus ad iudicium est raptus: qui quamvis lubricitati obnoxius fuerit, maximi tamen Patroni meruit patrocínio liberari. Et cum suis exigentibus peccatis damnari debuisset, ejus interventu placato iudice felici poenitentiae et placidae purgationi absque daemonum incursu traditus est. Alter vero propter animi sui impatientiam Loco suo, id est Patroni, praetulit alium, serviens ibi Deo, non tamen culpae ducens Sanctum quemquam praeferre Patrono. Excessit suo tempore et ipse, qui procacitatis quidem linguae inter caetera reus, sed, quod pro nichilo deputaverat, sui proprii defensione Patroni destitutus, deputatus est cum miseris, quorum poenitentiae sors gravissima agitur sub infestatione daemonica; numerusque annorum illi prolongatus est multum.



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Plan of a typical Cistercian Monastery (Fountains, built mainly between 1135 and 1215).

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